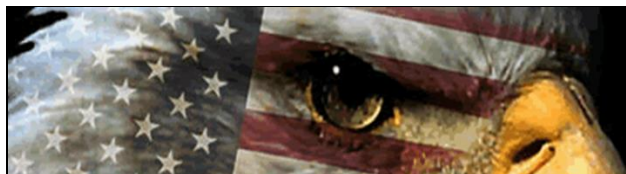



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HEADLINE	11/17 Recall: Ram heavy duty diesel pickups
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/ram-heavy-duty-diesel-trucks-recalled-engine-fire-93476192
GIST	DETROIT -- Stellantis is recalling nearly 250,000 heavy duty diesel Ram pickup trucks in the U.S. because transmission fluid can leak and cause engine fires.

	<p>The recall covers certain 2020 to 2023 Ram 2500 and some 2020 through 2022 Ram 3500 trucks. All have 6.7-liter Cummins diesel engines and 68RFE transmissions.</p> <p>The company says heat and pressure can build up in the transmission, expelling fluid from the dipstick tube. If the fluid hits a hot engine part, that can touch off a fire.</p> <p>Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, is still developing a repair. In the meantime the company says owners can still drive the trucks but drivers should contact a dealer if they see a dashboard warning light.</p> <p>The company says it has 16 reports of fires and 48 complaints, field reports and warranty claims due to the problem. It's aware of one minor injury caused by the issue.</p> <p>Owners are to be notified by letter starting Dec. 30. They can contact Stellantis customer service at (800) 853-1403.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Fewer file for jobless benefits
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/fewer-americans-file-jobless-benefits-week-93477400
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- The U.S. job market remains healthy as fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, despite the Federal Reserve's rapid interest rate hikes this year intended to bring down inflation and tighten the labor market.</p> <p>Applications for jobless claims for the week ending Nov. 12 fell by 4,000 to 222,000 from 226,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week moving average rose by 2,000 to 221,000.</p> <p>The total number of Americans collecting unemployment aid rose by 13,000 to 1.51 million for the week ending Nov. 5, a seven-month high, but still not a troubling level.</p> <p>Applications for jobless claims, which generally represent layoffs in the U.S., have remained historically low this year, deepening the challenges the Federal Reserve faces as it raises interest rates to try to bring inflation down from near a 40-year high.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Office buildings are still in trouble
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/17/business/office-buildings-real-estate-vacancy.html
GIST	<p>With the pandemic receding, children back in school and businesses telling employees to return to the office, the companies that own big office buildings were hoping to move on this fall from a nightmarish two years.</p> <p>Instead, things got worse.</p> <p>More office workers are back at their desks than a year ago, but attendance at office buildings in New York, Boston, Atlanta, San Francisco and other cities is languishing well below prepandemic levels. As leases come up for renewal, companies are often opting for smaller offices, saddling landlords with millions of square feet in vacant space. And more space is expected to hit the market in the coming months as companies like Meta, Salesforce and Lyft lay off workers. More than 100,000 technology workers have lost their jobs this year, according to Layoffs.fyi, a site that tracks job cuts.</p> <p>Higher interest rates are also weighing on the industry. Many landlords are no longer willing or able to acquire and spruce up older buildings or build new ones. Seeing little upside in holding on to sparsely occupied buildings and paying interest on mortgages, some landlords are simply handing over properties to lenders. Others are seeking to convert office buildings into residential complexes, though doing so can be expensive and take years.</p>

Wall Street investors appear to think the office space sector is in for a deep slump. The shares of large landlords and developers are trading close to or below their pandemic lows, underperforming the broader stock market by a huge margin. Some bonds backed by office loans are showing signs of stress.

The value of U.S. office buildings could plunge 39 percent, or \$454 billion, in the coming years, according to a recent study by business professors at Columbia and New York University.

“We see lots of tenants not renewing their leases, going either fully remote, or renewing their leases but signing up for less space,” said Stijn Van Nieuwerburgh, one of the authors of the paper, and a professor specializing in real estate at Columbia Business School. “It all adds up.”

A sickly office sector can hamper the recovery of cities that depend on the jobs and tax revenue that commercial buildings provide. For example, New York City collected about \$6.8 billion in property tax revenue from office towers in the fiscal year that ended in June, or around 9 percent of its total tax revenue, down from \$7.5 billion in the previous fiscal year. The market value of office buildings in the city fell [\\$28.6 billion](#) last year, the first such decline since at least 2000, the Office of the State Comptroller estimated.

In a sign of how fast the market has turned down in some places, companies are giving up space that they leased only months earlier. Meta, the parent of Facebook, recently decided to sublet all the space that it signed up for about 10 months earlier in an Austin, Texas, office tower called Sixth and Guadalupe. Meta must still pay the rent on 589,000 square feet, but its decision to find somebody else to occupy the space could push rents down across Austin, which until recently was seen as a thriving and growing technology hub.

The struggle to fill empty offices is a national phenomenon.

The amount of office space leased in the United States in the three months that ended in September was nearly a third below the quarterly average for 2018 and 2019, according to Avison Young, a commercial real estate services firm.

Office vacancy rates across the country stand at a record 19.1 percent, with Chicago, Houston and San Francisco running above 20 percent, according to Jones Lang LaSalle, a commercial real estate services company. That includes the record [185 million square feet](#), or 3.85 percent of total office space in the country, that is available for sublet. Another 104 million square feet of office space will come onto the market through 2024 as new buildings are completed, according to Jones Lang LaSalle.

In some ways, New York, the largest office market in the country, with 540 million square feet of space, is particularly vulnerable. Older office buildings in the city are losing their best tenants to new well-equipped buildings in neighborhoods like Hudson Yards on Manhattan’s Far West Side, leaving lots of empty office space in Midtown and downtown.

“The availability downtown is at a record high of 20.2 percent,” said Franklin Wallach, an executive managing director at the brokerage firm Colliers. “These are older buildings in the canyons of Wall Street, and we’re seeing large vacancies, not because of one single tenant but tenant migrations that are all hitting at once.”

Office landlords made it through the pandemic in reasonable health because corporate tenants with long leases kept paying rent even if their employees weren’t coming into the office.

But the landlords, who typically flash sunny optimism even in dark days, are now sounding more cautious. They acknowledge, somewhat grudgingly, that many of their corporate tenants are sticking with some form of work-from-home policy, and their bullishness is mostly focused on a small sliver of the market — new buildings.

Still, they believe demand for office space will eventually come back. William C. Rudin, the chief executive of Rudin Management, a New York developer and landlord, said that in past downturns, companies had given back space. But when the economy improved, corporate executives often changed their mind and said: “Oh, my God, we don’t have enough space. We’ve got to take more space.”

The work-from-home revolution is not confined to New York and San Francisco. Even in Texas, office attendance is well below where it was before the pandemic. Weekly occupancy is at 62 percent of prepandemic levels in Austin, 57 percent in Houston and 53 percent in Dallas, according to data from Kastle Systems, a security card swipe company.

Many landlords say Kastle’s data does not reflect attendance in their buildings. Kastle reports the New York metropolitan area weekly attendance at a little less than 50 percent of prepandemic levels, but Mr. Rudin said his towers were on average roughly 65 percent full over the course of a week. He added that occupancy was much higher at buildings with space leased by financial services companies, many of which have required employees to come back.

Office landlords borrow from banks and in credit markets to acquire and construct their buildings. So far, most of them are making their debt payments, according to data from Trepp. But signs of stress are appearing on commercial mortgage-backed securities. These bonds are backed by payments on office loans and then sliced into layers, where the top layer is more protected against defaults than those at the bottom.

“I think there is more difficulty to come,” said Gunter Seeger, a portfolio manager at Pinebridge Investments, which invests in the debt used to finance office buildings. “It happens in slow motion — you see it coming, but it doesn’t unfold quickly. We’re limping along.”

Investors, for instance, are nervously eyeing bonds that are backed in part by lease payments from tenants of 300 North LaSalle, a Chicago building owned by the Irvine Company. Boston Consulting Group and Kirkland & Ellis, a law firm, occupy just over 60 percent of the towering building, and both are set to leave in a couple of years. The price of one of the bonds, which carries a middling rating — neither the top layer nor the bottom — has slumped 22 percent so far this year, implying a yield of around 17 percent.

Representatives for the Irvine Company and Kirkland & Ellis declined to comment. Boston Consulting Group did not respond to requests for comment.

Williams & Connolly, a law firm, moved its headquarters this year from a building in downtown Washington to a new development at the Wharf. Hines, the owner of the older building, which had a 10-year, \$135 million loan against it, signed an agreement this fall with its lender, Allianz Real Estate, to sell the building.

A spokeswoman for Allianz declined to comment.

An executive at Hines, a privately held real estate investment firm, said that it had owned the building for more than 30 years and that it had been a profitable long-term investment. “We continue to operate the building and are working with the lender to sell the property to a third party,” Chuck Watters, senior managing director at Hines, said in a statement.

Landlords are also finding that some of their top tenants are making do with much less space when they move to new offices.

In August, KPMG signed a 20-year agreement to move its headquarters to Two Manhattan West, a skyscraper expected to open next year on the edge of Hudson Yards. KPMG, which has adopted a hybrid work model, is leaving three older buildings in Midtown and reducing the total space it leases by 40 percent.

	<p>“For our business, we believe a hybrid future — a blend of fully remote, hybrid and on-site teams — will deepen connections among current and potential employees and leaders, delivering us a competitive edge in the marketplace,” said W. Scott Horne, a KPMG spokesman.</p> <p>Mr. Rudin, whose company owns two of the buildings from which KPMG is moving, said, “We have a very good retention rate in our portfolio, but we also know that things change and requirements change.” He added that his firm was improving its older buildings and having success leasing them.</p> <p>Companies may find it hard to shrink their office space by much if most employees are expected to come in, say, three days a week. But analysts say that, over time, managers will become more adept at minimizing space. And executives could seek to cut costs by reducing office space even further if the economy slows sharply or slides into a recession.</p> <p>Mr. Van Nieuwerburgh, the Columbia professor, calculates that New York office space on average costs about \$16,000 a year per employee. “That’s real money,” he said, “and companies will try to save that.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Russia didn’t take US call in Poland strike
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/russia-didnt-take-us-phone-call-after-poland-missile-strike/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The top U.S. military officer said Wednesday that he tried to reach out to his Russian counterpart in the aftermath of the missile explosions in Poland, but wasn’t able to get through.</p> <p>Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said his staff tried to get Russia’s top-ranking military official Gen. Valery Gerasimov on the phone to discuss the incident with “no success.”</p> <p>Milley didn’t elaborate on the efforts, but the lack of communications raises concerns about high-level U.S.-Russian communications in a crisis. A strike against Poland, a NATO member, could have risked a larger conflict if it turned out that Russia had launched the strike.</p> <p>The U.S. and other top leaders now say they believe the strike was probably launched by Ukrainian air defenses to defend against a Russian missile bombardment. But uncertainty swirled for hours. Several U.S. defense officials said it isn’t unusual for Gerasimov to not be available for a call.</p> <p>The lack of communication is worrisome, especially given the potential implications of the strike, said John Tierney, executive director of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington.</p> <p>Open lines of communication “are vital if we are to avoid the risk of conflict caused by misconception, miscalculations or mistake,” Tierney said. “It is unsettling to learn from General Milley that his counterpart was unreachable or not willing to engage when an explosion occurred in Poland.”</p> <p>Milley did talk to his military counterparts in Ukraine and Poland as the governments worked quickly to assess whether the missile that killed two people in Poland had been launched by Russia or Ukraine.</p> <p>The conversation came as Milley has said that Russia’s recent defeat in the key southern city Kherson and the possible slowdown of military operations in the winter could provide an opportunity to negotiate.</p> <p>“You want to negotiate at a time when you’re at your strength, and your opponent is at weakness,” Milley said at a Pentagon briefing Wednesday. “The Russian military is suffering tremendously,” he said, citing large losses of Russian tanks, fighting vehicles, fighter jets and helicopters.</p> <p>If fighting slows down, Milley said that may become “a window” for talks about a political solution.</p>

	<p>Both he and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that they expect Ukraine to keep fighting through the winter, and the U.S. and its allies will continue to provide more support and weapons. And it will be up to Ukraine to determine any negotiation plans.</p> <p>“We’ve said repeatedly that the Ukrainians are going to decide that and not us. And we will support them for as long as it takes,” said Austin, who was also at the briefing.</p> <p>The missile that landed in Poland Tuesday was launched during the “largest wave of missiles that we’ve seen since the beginning of the war,” Austin said. On Tuesday Russia launched as many as 100 missiles at Ukraine as Moscow intensifies its airstrikes following significant ground losses.</p> <p>Milley said it’s unlikely that either side can gain a military victory quickly. He said the chance of Russia, which currently controls about 20% of Ukraine, overrunning the entire country “is close to zero.” And, he added, the “task of militarily kicking the Russians physically out of Ukraine is a very difficult task. And it’s not going to happen in the next couple of weeks unless the Russian army completely collapses, which is unlikely.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Oregon sheriffs won't enforce new gun law
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/oregon-sheriffs-against/2022/11/16/id/1096788/
GIST	<p>Oregon voters narrowly passed one of the nation's most restrictive gun laws on Nov. 8.</p> <p>But several of the state's county sheriffs said they won't enforce Measure 114, billed as the Reduction of Gun Violence Act, which requires people to obtain permits and complete safety training to acquire a firearm. It also calls for state police to create and maintain a searchable database of gun ownership.</p> <p>The measure, which passed by fewer than 26,000 votes of nearly 1.9 million cast, also bans the sale of gun magazines from carrying more than 10 rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>Linn County Sheriff Michelle Duncan said her department will not enforce the law. Linn County residents voted against the measure by a 70% to 30% margin.</p> <p>"This measure is poorly written and there is still a lot that needs to be sorted out regarding the permitting process, who has to do the training and what exactly does the training have to cover," Duncan said in a post on the county sheriff's Facebook account. "... I want to ensure anything we do or don't do will not hinder gunowners' rights to purchase firearms, intentionally or unintentionally."</p> <p>In another Facebook post, Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen agreed with Duncan. Seventy-seven percent of Union County residents voted against the measure.</p> <p>"This measure will only harm law-abiding gun owners and result in wasted time with additional redundant background checks," Bowen wrote. "With no funding from the state to provide additional payroll costs, this will ultimately sacrifice patrol and deputy presence in our community."</p> <p>Voters in seven counties, considered some of the state's Democratic strongholds, including Multnomah, Washington, Lane and Benton, passed the measure, according to The Oregonian; and 29 of the state's largely rural, conservative counties rejected it.</p> <p>Attorneys for the Oregon Firearms Federation, the Second Amendment Foundation and other gun rights advocates are preparing to ask a judge for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to prevent the measure from taking effect until a decision is made on its constitutionality, The Oregonian reported.</p>

	<p>"I believe Measure 114 is a violation of the United States Constitution and is contrary to current federal court precedent," Jefferson County Sheriff Jason Pollock wrote in a statement posted on the agency's Facebook page. Seventy-three percent of county voters rejected the measure.</p> <p>"I have read this measure," Pollock added. "It is poorly written and does not actually address the current criminal crisis our state currently faces."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Russia economy freefall: recession
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/russia-economy-recession-sanctions/2022/11/17/id/1096823/
GIST	<p>Russia's economy shrank 4% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2022, data from the Rosstat federal statistics service showed Wednesday, as the consequences of the country's military actions in Ukraine continued to weigh on the economy.</p> <p>That officially put the Russia economy in a recession, as it comes on top of a 4.1% contraction of Russia gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter, year-on-year. Western sanctions apparently are beginning to take a toll on Russia's finances and wider economy.</p> <p>Since the sanctions were imposed, Russia has suffered a tremendous drop in trade and an exodus of hundreds of thousands of skilled workers, the UK's Express reports.</p> <p>"We think the downturn may yet deepen in Q4 and Q1, as the recent mobilization of reservists and the EU oil embargo take their toll," says Liam Perch, senior markets analyst at Capital Economics.</p> <p>Russia's outlook through at least mid-2023, Perch says, "remains bleak."</p> <p>Russia's oil exports to Asian and the EU have been sharply reduced by sanctions, according to Express. However, the profits Russia has been able to gain from its oil and gas exports are widely seen as funding President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine. As well, Russia has been able to stabilize its banking industry, economists say.</p> <p>Russia deployed tens of thousands of troops to Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what Moscow calls a "special military operation." Before the full effects of sanctions had been felt, the Russian economy grew 3.5% in annual terms in the first quarter.</p> <p>Russia's economy ministry sees GDP falling by 2.9% this year, while the central bank expects a 3-3.5% drop before a return to growth in the second half of 2023.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Russia mobilization mired in problems
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/17/europe/russia-soldiers-desert-battlefield-intl-cmd/index.html
GIST	<p>Russia's first mobilization since World War II may be complete, but the deployment of thousands of soldiers to the battlefields of Ukraine is generating dissent and protest on the front lines – and back home.</p> <p>With the Russian government touting that at least 50,000 of the recently drafted are now in Ukraine, a long list of complaints is emerging: Lack of leadership from mid-ranking officers, tactics that lead to heavy casualties, non-existent training, promised payments not received.</p> <p>There are also logistical difficulties, as reported by soldiers, their families and Russian military bloggers: Insufficient uniforms, poor food, a lack of medical supplies.</p> <p>And there are discipline issues, with some families complaining their men face charges of desertion and are being held in basements in occupied Ukrainian territory.</p>

The Astra Telegram channel – a project of independent Russian journalists – reported that 300 mobilized Russians are being held in a basement in Zaitsevo in the Luhansk region for refusing to return to the front line, quoting their relatives.

One woman said her husband had told her: “New people are constantly brought in. They are in a large basement in the House of Culture in Zaitsevo. They feed them once a day: one dry ration to share between 5-6 people. They constantly threaten them.”

Astra reported it had the names of 42 people of those detained. It also cited relatives in identifying seven basements or detention facilities in Luhansk and Donetsk for soldiers.

It [quoted](#) the wife of one detained soldier as saying: “My husband and 80 other people are sitting in the basement; they were stripped naked in order to confiscate their phones, but one person, fortunately, hid the phone.”

Astra said the men were arrested after retreating from the town of Lyman and then refusing to return to the line of fire.

CNN is unable to verify the existence or location of detention centers for men refusing to fight.

There are widespread complaints about incompetent or non-existent leadership.

Russian military bloggers – some of whom have hundreds of thousands of followers – have been bitterly critical of senior officers.

“Do we have generals capable of replacing those who have been sacked? Does anyone know one? I don’t,” asked Vladen Tatarskiy, who has more than half-a-million subscribers. “One idiot is rotated for another. One fails, another fails, the third seems more harmless.”

In a bold note of dissent, soldiers of the 155th Brigade of the Russian Pacific Fleet Marines wrote to their regional governor saying they’d been thrown into an “incomprehensible battle” in the Donetsk region.

“As a result of the ‘carefully’ planned offensive by the ‘great commanders’, we lost about 300 men, dead and wounded, with some MIA over the past 4 days,” the letter said. It was published by a Russian military blogger and widely circulated.

One prominent military blogger claimed the 155th and another unit “lost twice as many men in Pavlivka” – in Donetsk region – “as during the two Chechnya wars.”

In a rare acknowledgment of criticism, the Russian Defense Ministry retorted that losses did “not exceed 1% of the combat strength and 7% of the wounded, a significant part of whom have already returned to duty.”

But the reported debacle around Pavlivka is not an isolated incident.

Kateryna Stepanenko, who tracks [the Russian military](#) at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War, says: “We have seen many complaints about unprepared mobilized men who were committed to the Svatove-Kreminka frontline [in Luhansk], which is currently one of the combat-heavy positions for Russian forces.”

Protests back home

As soldiers relay their plight back home, their complaints are being amplified by wives and mothers through social media and in direct appeals to regional authorities.

Stepanenko says the “most common complaints from these families are lack of information from the Ministry of Defense on the whereabouts of their loved ones, delayed payments, and lack of supplies.”

Last week, video [emerged](#) from TV Rain, a Russian media outlet that now operates in exile, of servicemen's relatives gathered at a military base in the city of Boguchar in Voronezh region, many complaining that they'd not heard from husbands or sons since early October.

In another video posted on the social network vk.com on Monday, a group of women in Voronezh said their husbands and sons were on the front line without commanders, without water, necessary clothing or weapons.

One woman, Lyudmila Agarkova, said her son had told her that very few of his battalion had survived. "They literally crawled out from under the corpses," she said.

Appealing to the governor of Voronezh for help, the women say their men "were not trained, they were taken to the firing range just once, they had no combat experience."

They also complain that they can't get answers, with one saying: "We are a few minutes away from the military commissariat. None of the staff ever gets in touch, they completely ignore us."

A video posted on YouTube shows a dozen women reportedly from Sverdlovsk region, some with young children, appealing for help for recruits from the 55th brigade reportedly hiding out near Svatove in Luhansk. The families say their men have been threatened with military tribunals but argue they should not have been on the front line at all.

One woman says her son had called, saying they were "left without any command, without ammunition, hungry and cold, they are all ill."

"They ended up there without any professional training," says another woman, whose 41-year old husband was mobilized.

"They don't get paid. They are not assigned to any military unit. Where to look for them, whom to ask, we don't know."

Occasionally, local authorities do respond. The military commissar of the Vladimir region, Yuri Gusarov, responded to relatives who said their men "were sent to the front near Svatove without proper equipment and training."

"Our military units have weapons, body armor, clothes, water, hot meals. Deliveries of aid from the Vladimir region are regular, communication with the commanders is maintained," the military commissar replied.

More often than not, the families don't get a response.

Journalist Anastasia Kashevarova, whose Telegram channel has more than 200,000 subscribers, said she'd received hundreds of messages from relatives of fighters. "Groups are abandoned without communication, without the necessary weapons, without medicines, naturally without artillery. No one knows who is on their right, who is on the left, who is in the rear," she posted.

"Instead of being listened to, they are threatened with punishment, a tribunal, and sent back to the front line with four magazines of ammunition and a grenade launcher with a few shots."

CNN reached out to relatives of men in the 55th brigade from Tomsk and confirmed that they had met the local military command. But a day later, one woman texted: "Apologies, but our lips have been sealed."

The moderator of one Telegram channel for families told CNN that mothers and wives often fear "repressive retribution" against their loved ones if they speak out. The moderator, who CNN is not identifying for their safety, said that at the local level "some authorities are already calling them

‘deserters,’ without investigating why they were sent to Ukraine without training, equipment or command on the front line.”

But complaining can come at a price. Olga Kuznetsova, a resident of Arkhangelsk, was found guilty of “discrediting the Russian Armed Forces” after collecting signatures against mobilization. She was fined 15,000 rubles (\$250).

Training deficit

Western officials say the Russian war machine is struggling to assimilate tens of thousands of largely inexperienced recruits.

The [UK’s Ministry of Defense](#) said last week that “Russia is probably struggling to provide military training for its current mobilization drive and its annual autumn conscription intake. Newly mobilized conscripts likely have minimal training or no training at all. Experienced officers and trainers have been deployed to fight in Ukraine and some have likely been killed in the conflict.”

Ukrainian intelligence has reported that the Russian military is speeding up the graduations of cadets but Stepanenko says that “while these cadets may be more familiar with military craft, it’s hard to say how effective they will be in combat.”

Ukrainian officials acknowledge that Russia’s mobilization has put more men into battle, pulling Ukrainian troops in different directions. But they say new recruits are being thrown into battle with no preparation.

Serhii Hayday, head of the Ukrainian Regional Military Administration in Luhansk, said last week that near Svatove, raw conscripts had advanced in waves.

“They die, and the next ones go forward. Every new attack is accompanied by the fact that the Russians are trampling their dead.”

As winter sets in, the need for accommodation and supplies for troops far from home base is even more critical.

Natalia Ivanova posted on the VKcontact page of a regional official that her husband’s unit was kept waiting for hours outside, before the deployment was canceled. “Now everyone is sick, with a temperature!” she said.

Stepanenko points to instances of protests among newly mobilized troops yet to be sent to Ukraine – principally over pay – “with two notable examples being in Chuvashia and Ulyansk.”

Video emerged earlier this month of dozens of men in Chuvashia, a republic in central Russia, angry that they had not received the 195,000 rubles promised in a decree [signed by President Vladimir Putin](#).

Unofficial Telegram channels said the whole unit had subsequently been placed under house arrest.

Across Russia, relatives of the mobilized are also chasing unpaid compensation, for example, for buying uniform when it was not issued, with CNN finding many such posts on local government social media.

Dozens of mobilized men in Kazan region protested due to poor conditions at their training ground and a lack of water, food and firewood for heating. In one video, a man is heard demanding that washing machines are installed. Then, he said, they “would be happy to be in the mud every day from morning to evening.”

It’s too early to make a full assessment of the impact of Russia’s mobilization of more than 300,000 men. That’s double the number of men involved at the start of the Ukrainian invasion and would help plug gaps in units degraded by nine months of conflict.

	<p>But the caliber of these troops, leadership in the field and a logistics chain that has never excelled do not bode well for the Russian army.</p> <p>Stepanenko thinks it's possible "that more reports of deaths or lack of payments may upset more Russians – both those who are pro-war and those who are only involved in the war because of mobilization."</p> <p>For the moment, mobilization has not brought Putin's special military operation any closer to its stated goals.</p> <p>Indeed, in chunks of regions annexed with such fanfare by Russia in September, the Ukrainian flag is being raised again.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Ukraine rare public split Poland missile
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ukraine-allies-clash-poland-blast-biden-evidence-putin-war-rcna57631
GIST	<p>LONDON — In a rare display of public discord, Ukraine and its Western backers are openly clashing over who launched the missile that killed two civilians in NATO member Poland.</p> <p>It may be the most significant rift during the war so far between Ukraine and its supporters, including the United States, and comes at a crucial moment as winter approaches with Russian forces on the retreat.</p> <p>Although the U.S. and its allies have called the incident an unfortunate accident, the starkly divergent takes on what took place threaten to undermine the united front that has helped Kyiv preserve staunch military and diplomatic support from the West throughout the nearly 9-month war.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy insisted "it was not our missile" that struck Polish farmland, a harrowing incident that raised the specter of NATO and its nuclear-armed members being dragged directly into the Kremlin's war.</p> <p>On national television Wednesday, Zelenskyy said he'd been briefed personally on the matter by the Ukrainian military leadership, adding: "I have no grounds to doubt them."</p> <p>But President Joe Biden offered a striking rebuttal when asked early Thursday about the Ukrainian leader's assertion.</p> <p>"That's not the evidence," Biden said as he returned to the White House from an overseas trip.</p> <p>An untimely dispute?</p> <p>In fact, less than 24 hours after the strike, both NATO and Poland said it was likely a Ukrainian-launched air defense missile, intended to shoot down one of as many as 100 cruise missiles Russia launched against Ukrainian cities in what may have been the most brutal barrage of the war to date.</p> <p>"Let me be clear. This is not Ukraine's fault," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels. Citing Ukraine's need for self-defense, he added: "Russia bears ultimate responsibility."</p> <p>The White House quickly agreed, saying the U.S. had "seen nothing that contradicts" Poland's assessment that a Ukrainian air defense missile likely landed in its territory. At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the U.S. was "still gathering information" but concurred about the missile's likely Ukrainian origins.</p> <p>"We have full confidence in the Polish government investigation of this explosion," Austin said. And at the United Nations, U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield sought to delicately refocus the</p>

	<p>conversation, telling the Security Council: “This tragedy would never have happened but for Russia’s needless invasion of Ukraine.”</p> <p>Evelyn Farkas, a former top Pentagon official for Russia, told NBC News she worried the public disagreement was a distraction at a key moment when the focus should be on rallying behind Ukraine and deterring Moscow from infringing on any NATO territory.</p> <p>“Any kind of disputes we have about what happened should be discussed behind closed doors,” said Farkas, the executive director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership. “Arguing about what missile it was publicly only serves to help Russia and makes it look like we lack political cohesiveness and the will to stand up to Russia.”</p> <p>Throughout the war, Russia has tried to stoke divisions between Ukraine and its allies, hoping to dent Western support that has proven critical to Kyiv’s unlikely battlefield success.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Czech Republic: Russia is a terrorist state
SOURCE	https://euroweeklynews.com/2022/11/16/czech-republic-russia-terrorist-state/
GIST	<p>THE Czech Republic officially recognises Russia as a terrorist at the state level, the country’s parliament announced.</p> <p>The Czech Republic’s Chamber of Deputies dubbed Russia a terrorist state under its current regime, in an announced made late on Tuesday, November 15.</p> <p>“The MPs condemned, in particular, large-scale attacks on the Ukrainian civilian population and key energy infrastructure,” the announcement began.</p> <p>“They do not even recognise the results of the so-called referendums on the annexation of four occupied regions in eastern Ukraine to Russia.”</p> <p>129 of the 156 MPs present voted for the draft resolution, while all 14 legislators from the opposition SPD movement were against it.</p> <p>The Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic said it “condemns Russian aggression in Ukraine, in accordance with the resolution of the UN General Assembly of March 2, 2022, the resolution of the Council of Europe No. 2463 of October 13, 2022, and the resolution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union of 14 October 2022.”</p> <p>It added: “[Czech Republic] condemns in particular large-scale attacks on the civilian population, civilian objects and key energy infrastructure, which are an obvious attempt to achieve political goals through intimidation of the civilian population and correspond to terrorist methods.</p> <p>“[Czech Republic] notes that these attacks cause extensive restrictions or stoppages of energy, water or heat supplies, endangering the civilian population.</p> <p>“The shelling and deployment of military units in the area of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant are a threat not only on the territory of Ukraine.</p> <p>“Direct or indirect threats to use nuclear weapons, as well as false and unsubstantiated accusations of Ukraine planning to use weapons of mass destruction, are a dangerous escalation of tensions and a threat to pan-European security.”</p> <p>“[Czech Republic] designates, in accordance with the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the current Russian regime as a terrorist,” it added.</p>

	<p>“[Czech Republic] does not recognise the results of the so-called referendums called by the Russian Federation on the sovereign territory of Ukraine in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, which aim to legitimize Russian aggression and annexation of Ukrainian territory.</p> <p>“[Czech Republic] expresses support for the efforts of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to establish a special tribunal for the prosecution of crimes of aggression, as well as the investigation led by the International Criminal Court leading to the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and further support and thanks to the government of the Czech Republic for the assistance it has provided to Ukraine so far, whether already humanitarian, economic, political, diplomatic or in the supply of military material.”</p> <p>The Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic concluded by “[expressing] support and a big thank you to governors, mayors, firefighters, soldiers, policemen, paramedics and citizens for handling the whole situation and all the help.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Philadelphia district attorney impeached
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/philadelphia-district-attorney-larry-krasner-faces-impeachment-vote-in-pennsylvania-house-11668604729?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>The Pennsylvania House impeached Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, as Republican legislators pushed to remove the twice-elected prosecutor whose liberal policies they blame for fueling record levels of violent crime in the city.</p> <p>The Republican-led chamber impeached Mr. Krasner, a Democrat, on Wednesday by a vote of 107-85, largely along party lines, after more than two hours of emotional debate. The next step will be a trial in the GOP-led state Senate. Conviction and removal from office would require a two-thirds majority. It couldn't be determined when a trial might be held.</p> <p>State Rep. Martina White, a Philadelphia Republican who was the lead sponsor of the impeachment resolution, exhorted members moments before Wednesday's vote to support Mr. Krasner's impeachment.</p> <p>“His dereliction of duty and despicable behavior is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated,” she said. “The legislature has a duty and the only authority to act when a public official refuses to perform their duties and puts the public in danger.”</p> <p>Mr. Krasner has said House Republicans mischaracterized his record. When GOP members introduced two articles of impeachment last month, he called the move devastating to democracy, adding, “It shows how far toward fascism the Republican party is creeping.” Lawmakers on the House floor Wednesday added five more articles of impeachment.</p> <p>The impeachment comes a year after Mr. Krasner overwhelmingly won a second four-year term. He said his office vigorously prosecutes the most serious and violent crimes while adhering to the U.S. and Pennsylvania constitutions.</p> <p>After the vote Wednesday, Mr. Krasner tweeted: “Philadelphians’ votes, and Philadelphia voters, should not be erased. History will harshly judge this anti-democratic authoritarian effort to erase Philly’s votes—votes by Black, brown, and broke people in Philadelphia. And voters will have the last word.”</p> <p>First elected in 2017, Mr. Krasner is one of several liberal prosecutors who have taken office around the U.S. in recent years. They have pursued goals such as diverting nonviolent drug offenders to treatment instead of jail, sparing juveniles from being tried as adults and devoting resources to scrutinizing old cases in search of wrongful prosecutions and imprisonments.</p> <p>Philadelphia, like many major cities, has struggled with a surge of violent crime since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Homicides in Philadelphia hit a record 562 last year, after rising for years,</p>

from 277 in 2016. So far this year, the city has recorded 459 homicides, 5% fewer than at this point last year, police department statistics show.

The two original impeachment articles from last month didn't allege any violations of law, but rather misbehavior in office, a phrase given in the state's Constitution as grounds for impeachment. One article claimed Mr. Krasner's policies have substantially contributed to the increase in crime in Philadelphia, and endangered the public.

The other article said he obstructed efforts of a special GOP-led House committee formed in June to investigate Philadelphia crime. The House later voted to hold Mr. Krasner in contempt for not complying with a committee subpoena. A lawyer for Mr. Krasner's office labeled the subpoena unlawful, saying it sought secret grand-jury records, violated the separation of powers and interfered with local democratic rule.

The House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday voted 14-8 along party lines to send the impeachment matter to the 203-seat House.

The articles added Wednesday contain claims that Mr. Krasner and his office have misled judges in some cases, as well as victims of crime. One of the articles alleges that Mr. Krasner directed that crimes including sex work, theft and drug-related offenses "would no longer be prosecuted and were therefore de facto legal."

A spokeswoman for Mr. Krasner said the office prosecutes theft and drug-trafficking crimes, but generally doesn't prosecute sex-work or drug-possession cases, as part of an effort to stop incarcerating people who aren't a danger to the public and need services.

Last month the special House committee released a report critical of Mr. Krasner's tenure. It said 65% of [violent-crime cases](#) to date in 2022 had been withdrawn by his office or dismissed by courts. It said cases involving some gun-related charges had been withdrawn by the DA's office at roughly double the statewide average in 2019 and 2020. The report didn't recommend impeachment.

On Tuesday, Mr. Krasner's office posted a detailed rebuttal to the GOP criticism. It said 83% of trial-ready fatal shooting cases end in conviction, as do 87% of all trial-ready homicides. When the office declines or downgrades charges, the office said, it is nearly always because of new information or evidence that police or prosecutors didn't initially have.

Republican Rep. Torren Ecker, who sponsored the amendment that added the five articles, said impeaching the district attorney was necessary. "Misrepresenting to courts, withholding information from victims, failing to charge, blanket disregard for the laws of this state is misbehavior in office," he said.

Several Democratic House members portrayed impeachment as a rushed and unjustified step that subverts the will of Philadelphians who twice elected Mr. Krasner by wide margins, even as they acknowledged the serious problem of gun violence.

"People in my community and so many others that are represented made a decision of who they want to be the top lawyer in our city," said Philadelphia Rep. Joanna McClinton, the House Democratic leader. "Impeachment now seems to be a measure that we're using when we have a disagreement on public policy."

Democratic Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta of Philadelphia criticized Republicans for pushing Mr. Krasner's removal after blocking gun-control laws and other measures he said would improve public safety in the city.

"I would ask us to pick up a mirror and ask, do we think it's derelict of our duty when members of this body reject common-sense gun safety? Should my colleagues be impeached for being derelict in their duty?" he said.

Impeachments have been extremely rare in Pennsylvania. The last time was in 1994, when the state House impeached, and the Senate later convicted, Rolf Larsen, a state Supreme Court justice. He faced a range of allegations, including accusations that he gave favorable treatment to lawyers who were friends and political contributors. The Larsen impeachment was the first in Pennsylvania since before the Civil War, according to a research memo by a Democratic legislative staffer on the House Judiciary Committee.

After Mr. Krasner won last year's Democratic primary, he noted that Philadelphia's steep uptick in gun violence during the pandemic had mirrored increases in many cities. He said he had kept campaign promises by not seeking the death penalty, not prosecuting most simple drug-possession cases and moving away from cash bail for minor crimes.

Partisan control of the House hangs in the balance after last week's elections. Democrats won 101 seats and Republicans won 100, but two others are too close to call, according to the Associated Press. Republican candidates have narrow leads in both races.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Iran issues death sentences to protesters
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-hands-out-more-death-sentences-to-protesters-11668611590?mod=hp_listb_pos5
GIST	<p>Iran sentenced three more protesters to death Wednesday, heightening fears that the government will resort to executions to intimidate Iranians from rallying against the country's clerical leadership, as state media accused shooters of killing several civilians in the southern part of the country.</p> <p>The three unidentified individuals were found guilty of corruption on earth or waging war against God for alleged offenses that included killing or injuring security forces, damaging public property and endangering national security, according to the judiciary's news agency, Mizan.</p> <p>Wednesday's announcement brings the number of people sentenced to death in connection with the recent protests to at least five, according to judiciary statements, but scores more could be at risk of facing similar penalties.</p> <p>On Wednesday evening, state media said two gunman on motorbikes shot at security forces with Kalashnikov rifles, killing five people.</p> <p>"Following a call by the opposition and anti-revolution groups, armed terrorists took advantage of the [demonstrations] of some people and carried out a shooting," state news agency IRNA said.</p> <p>State media also broadcast footage from Izeh of what it said was an Islamic seminary set on fire by rioters. Iran has previously issued harsh punishments to protesters accused of disturbing public order or even terrorism. In late October, Iran blamed protesters for paving the way for a shooting in the southern city of Shiraz, in which 15 people were killed. Islamic State claimed responsibility for that attack.</p> <p>The fear that the state will use death sentences to quash protests is compounded by President Ebrahim Raisi's history as a member of a panel that in the late 1980s condemned thousands of alleged dissidents to death following an eight-year war with Iraq. Amnesty International at the time called the decisions about which prisoners should be executed "arbitrary in the extreme."</p> <p>In late October, eight protesters were charged with crimes carrying the death penalty. Some 1,000 indictments have been issued in connection with the protests, with public trials expected in Tehran's Revolutionary Court in "the coming days," Tehran's prosecutor said in late October.</p> <p>Wednesday marked two months since the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who died in police detention after being arrested for allegedly breaching Iran's strict Islamic dress code. Nationwide protests</p>

have ensued ever since, transforming from calls for the end of the mandatory headscarf, or hijab, to demands for the end of Islamic governance.

Protests continued on Wednesday. Shopkeepers across the country closed their stores on the second of a three-day strike, following street protests on Tuesday in the capital, Tehran, and the Kurdistan province where Ms. Amini was from.

Nearly 16,000 have been arrested since the beginning of the protests, according to the Human Rights Activists News Agency, which documents allegations of human-rights violations in Iran. It isn't known how many remain in prison. At least 348 protesters have been killed in clashes with security forces, including 52 minors, according to HRANA.

One of the individuals sentenced Wednesday was accused of killing a police officer and injuring several others by running over them with his car, and was convicted of corruption on earth. Two others were convicted of waging war on God on charges connected with the stabbing of a security officer and torching of a government building in Pakdasht, and for blocking traffic and committing vandalism, respectively, Mizan news agency said.

Both charges are vaguely defined and have been used in the past to sentence dissidents to death. Iran has a history of sentencing dissidents in trials without due process, human-rights groups say, and has long been accused by Western countries and Iranian activists of using torture and violence to obtain confessions.

Following the 2009 Green Movement protests, which were prompted by accusations of election fraud, hundreds of protesters were put on trial. Several were executed for crimes ranging from killing police officers to rape, including at least one minor.

The recent death sentences follow a call by a majority of Iran's parliamentarians this month for the judiciary to issue harsher and quicker sentences to protesters. The push amplified fears among activists that authorities would use Iran's murky legal system to issue death sentences to try to quell protests. Among the arrested are at least two dozen lawyers, according to HRANA.

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HEADLINE	11/16 FDA: lab-grown meat safe to eat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/11/16/fda-lab-meat-approval/
GIST	<p>The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday declared a lab-grown meat product developed by a California start-up to be safe for human consumption, paving the way for products derived from real animal cells — but that don't require an animal to be slaughtered — to someday be available in U.S. grocery stores and restaurants.</p> <p>Dozens of major food companies are jostling to debut cultivated meat to the American public. As of now, Singapore is the only country in which these products are legally sold to consumers. The FDA's announcement that cultivated chicken from Emeryville-based Upside Foods is safe to eat is likely to open the floodgates in the United States in the coming months.</p> <p>Upside Foods, formerly known as Memphis Meats, is harvesting cells from viable animal tissues and growing edible flesh under controlled conditions in bioreactors, flesh the firm says will be identical to that raised conventionally. Alternatives to traditional animal agriculture are seen as a way to mitigate climate change, and have been a major topic of discussion this week at the United Nations climate change conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.</p> <p>Whether consumers will embrace this form of meat remains a question. Despite the money and hopes invested in realistic simulated-meat products such as Beyond and Impossible, which are made with vegetable protein, the market for these alt-meat products has cooled. High prices, too, will be a challenge to widespread adoption, experts say.</p>

Still, boosters of cultivated meat say it has huge potential.

“We will see this as the day the food system really started changing,” said Costa Yiannoulis, managing partner at Synthesis Capital, the world’s largest food technology fund. “The U.S. is the first meaningful market that has approved this — this is seismic and groundbreaking.”

Wednesday’s announcement takes cultivated meat, also called cell-cultured meat, a step closer to Americans’ dinner plates, but there are still hurdles to widespread availability. Upside’s chicken-production technology is transferrable to multiple animal species, Yiannoulis said, but each product will have to be approved by federal regulators before it can go to market. Upside estimates that upon approval from the Agriculture Department, it would still be months before its chicken could be on the market.

“It will have to be case by case, certainly for the first few. It won’t be boilerplate approval,” Yiannoulis said. Still, the approval signals that the agency may soon approve the products of several cultivated meat start-ups that have been seeking regulatory approval since 2018, he said.

The cultivated-meat industry has grown to more than 151 companies on six continents, backed by more than \$2.6 billion in investments, according to the Good Food Institute, a nonprofit group that promotes alternatives to traditional meat. Still, initial costs of production may make products prohibitively expensive.

“It’s actually hard to make a reasonable facsimile of an animal tissue from cultured cells,” Pat Brown, founder of plant-based Impossible Foods, told The Washington Post last year. “Theoretically it’s doable, and there’s no question that it will be done at some point. But it will never be done with anything remotely like the economics you need for food.”

If lab meats can replicate the taste and texture of traditional meat — at a similar or lower cost and with fewer downsides — it could be a game changer for global nutrition, many experts have said. The Stockholm Environment Institute recently issued a report that found the production of animal-based foods responsible for as much as 20 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, and that if meat consumption continues along current trends, it will be impossible to keep global warming below the goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

“This is a critical milestone toward the future of food. Cultivated meat will soon be available to consumers in the U.S. who desire their favorite foods made more sustainably, with production requiring a fraction of the land and water of conventional meat when produced at scale,” said Bruce Friedrich, president of the Good Food Institute.

Not everyone, however, is convinced the public will adopt this new technology.

“The FDA is using the same regulatory review process as biotech crops, which has not resulted in widespread consumer confidence or universal marketplace acceptance,” said Gregory Jaffe, biotechnology project director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The regulation of lab-grown meat in the United States is being done collaboratively between the FDA and USDA. Under a March 2019 formal agreement, both agencies agreed to a joint regulatory framework wherein the FDA oversees cell collection, cell banks and cell growth and differentiation. And then the USDA will oversee the processing and labeling of human food products derived from the cells of livestock and poultry.

Every firm that makes these products must get approval from each agency, whether or not they follow the same production method as a firm that has received approval, the USDA said in a statement. Companies that want to produce these products commercially must also apply for a USDA grant of inspection, and facilities will be subject to the same food safety, sanitation and inspection regulations as other meat and poultry products. The exception is cultivated seafood, which needs only FDA approval.

	The FDA said in a statement it is already engaged in discussion with multiple firms about various types of products made from cultured animal cells, including those made from seafood cells, and that the FDA is ready to work with additional firms developing cultured animal cell food and production processes.
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HEADLINE	11/17 Myanmar releases American, 3 foreigners
SOURCE	https://time.com/6234638/myanmar-prisoner-release-american/
GIST	<p>BANGKOK — Myanmar’s military-controlled government announced Thursday it was releasing and deporting an Australian academic, a Japanese filmmaker, an ex-British diplomat and an American as part of a broad prisoner amnesty to mark the country’s National Victory Day.</p> <p>Australian Sean Turnell, Japan’s Toru Kubota, Briton Vicky Bowman, and American Kyaw Htay Oo, as well as 11 local Myanmar celebrities, were among a total of 5,774 prisoners who were being released, Myanmar’s state-run MRTV reported.</p> <p>The imprisonment of the foreign nationals had been a source of friction between Myanmar’s leaders and their home governments, which had been lobbying for their release.</p> <p>According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a rights monitoring organization, 16,232 people have been detained on political charges in Myanmar since the army ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February last year.</p> <p>Of those arrested, 13,015 were still in detention as of Wednesday, the AAPP reported. Additionally, at least 2,465 civilians have been killed by security forces in the same period, the group says, though the number is thought to be far higher.</p> <p>Amnesty International Australia’s Tim O’Connor welcomed the decision to release Turnell, saying like many others, he should never have been arrested or jailed.</p> <p>“Amnesty continues to call for the release of all those arbitrarily detained for peacefully exercising their human rights,” he said. “Thousands of people jailed since the coup in Myanmar have done nothing wrong.”</p> <p>Japan’s top government spokesperson, Hirokazu Matsuno, told reporters Kubota was due to leave Myanmar on a flight Thursday night and could be in Japan as soon as Friday. He said officials believe the 26-year-old Tokyo-based documentary filmmaker is in good health.</p> <p>Britain’s embassy in Yangon said Bowman had not yet been released from prison. Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong tweeted that she welcomed reports of Turnell being released, but would not comment further for the time being, and the U.S. Embassy in Yangon referred queries to Washington.</p> <p>Turnell, 58, an associate professor in economics at Sydney’s Macquarie University who had been serving as an advisor to Suu Kyi, was arrested by security forces at a hotel in Yangon just days after last year’s military takeover. He was sentenced in September to three years in prison for violating the country’s official secrets law and immigration law. Suu Kyi and three of her former Cabinet members were convicted in the same trial, which was held in a closed court, with their lawyers barred by a gag order from taking about the proceedings.</p> <p>Fellow Australian economist Tim Harcourt said in an email he was delighted to hear of his longtime friend Sean Turnell’s release.</p> <p>He thanked the Australian government, activists and Turnell’s friends and colleagues who had lobbied for his release and said he was looking forward to him returning home to Sydney.</p> <p>“It’s a great relief to his wonderful wife Ha, his sister and father and all the family,” Harcourt said.</p>

“Sean’s heart was with the people of Myanmar to help lift them about of poverty and help Myanmar reach its economic potential. He should never have been imprisoned for doing his professional duty as an economist involved in development economics,” he said.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the takeover, which led to nationwide protests that the military government quashed with deadly force, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. experts now characterize as civil war.

Kubota was arrested July 30 by plainclothes police in Yangon after taking images and videos of a small flash protest against the military. He was convicted last month by the prison court of incitement for participating in the protest and other charges and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Since seizing power, the military has cracked down on the coverage of protests, raided media companies, detained dozens of journalists and revoked the licenses of at least a dozen outlets.

Most of those detained are being held on the incitement charge for allegedly causing fear, spreading false news, or agitating against a government employee.

Some of the closed media outlets have continued operating without a license and many Myanmar journalists are working underground, moving from one safe house to another, hiding in remote border regions, or basing themselves in exile.

Kubota was the fifth foreign journalist detained in Myanmar after the military seized power. U.S. citizens Nathan Maung and Danny Fenster, who worked for local publications, and freelancers Robert Bociaga of Poland and Yuki Kitazumi of Japan were eventually deported before having to serve full prison sentences.

Bowman, 56, a former British ambassador to Myanmar who had been running a business consultancy, was arrested with her husband, a Myanmar national, in Yangon in August. She was given a one-year prison term in September by the prison count for failing to register her residence.

Kyaw Htay Oo, a naturalized American, returned to Myanmar, the country of his birth, in 2017, according to media reports. He was arrested in September 2021 on terrorism charges and has been in custody ever since.

Myanmar did not release many details of the other prisoners who were being freed, but almost all would have been being held on charges related to the protests, including Section 505(A) of Myanmar’s penal code, which makes it a crime to spread comments that create public unrest or fear or spread false news, and carries a penalty of up to three years in prison.

Among those released were also Kyaw Tint Swe, a former union minister for the office of the State Counsellor, Than Htay, a former member of the Union Election Commission and Lae Lae Maw, a former Chief Minister of Tanintharyi Region who had been jailed for 30 years for corruption since 2020 under Suu Kyi’s government, MRTV announced.

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HEADLINE	11/16 WHO: global increase weekly Covid cases
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2022-11-16/who-reports-first-global-increase-of-weekly-covid-19-cases-in-four-months
GIST	The World Health Organization on Wednesday reported that global coronavirus cases increased last week for the first time in months.

Weekly cases have been either stable or on the decline since mid-July, according to the organization's weekly epidemiological reports. But last week saw a 2% increase in cases, raising the number to 2.3 million infections, WHO [reported](#).

WHO also cautioned that the true number of infections is likely higher than the estimate "due to a decline in testing globally."

"Current trends in reported COVID-19 cases should be interpreted with caution as several countries have been progressively changing COVID-19 testing strategies, resulting in lower overall numbers of tests performed and consequently lower numbers of cases detected," the report said.

Coronavirus deaths, on the other hand, decreased significantly over the same week, with over 7,400 fatalities reported.

"We have come a long way, and this is definitely cause for optimism, but we continue to call on all governments, communities and individuals to remain vigilant," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a press conference last week. "Testing and sequencing rates remain low globally, vaccination gaps remain wide and the continued proliferation of new variants remains concerning."

Coronavirus cases in the U.S. are also [increasing](#) as a pair of concerning omicron subvariants, BQ.1.1 and BQ.1, spread.

COVID-19 infections have been trending downward in the U.S. since August but increased about 10% over the past two weeks, according to [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 40,000 new cases are reported on average each day, but that is likely a massive [undercount](#) due to at-home tests that don't get reported.

While experts and the Biden administration have been predicting a [COVID-19 surge](#) this fall and winter, White House COVID-19 response coordinator Ashish Jha this week walked those predictions back slightly. He [told](#) STAT News that the U.S. will not have another COVID-19 surge from holiday gatherings like it did last year when the omicron variant started to spread.

"We are in a very different place and we will remain in a different place," Jha said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Overdose deaths peaking? Experts wary
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/us-overdose-deaths-may-be-peaking-but-experts-are/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Have U.S. drug overdose deaths stopped rising? Preliminary government data suggests they may have, but many experts are urging caution, noting that past plateaus didn't last.</p> <p>U.S. overdose death rates began steadily climbing in the 1990s driven by opioid painkillers, followed by waves of deaths led by other opioids like heroin and - most recently - illicit fentanyl. Last year, more than 107,000 Americans died of drug overdoses - the highest tally in U.S. history.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released provisional data on what happened through the first six months of this year. The news appears to be hopeful.</p> <p>Provisional data indicates U.S. overdose deaths fell three months in a row. The CDC estimated there were about 107,600 overdose deaths for the 12-month period between July 2021 and June 2022. That's 40 fewer than in the 2021 calendar year.</p> <p>"Today's data continue to show a hopeful trend of a decrease in overdose deaths," but more prevention and treatment work is needed, Dr. Rahul Gupta, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, said in a statement Wednesday.</p>

Indeed, the decline is uneven. Only eight states reported fewer overdose deaths, while all the others showed continued increases. And only four states - Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia - reported sizable overdose death decreases of 100 or more, compared with the previous July-to-June period.

Those few states, which have had some of the nation's the highest overdose death rates, appear to be at the root of the national improvement this year, said Brandon Marshall, a Brown University public health researcher who tracks overdose trends.

Officials in the four states said there was no single explanation, but they believe recent efforts may be paying off. They cite social media and health education campaigns to warn the public about the dangers of drug use, expanded addiction treatment and wider distribution of the overdose-reversing medication naloxone.

"I'm so proud of everything going on in this state," said Robin Rickard, executive director of Maryland's Opioid Operational Command Center. She singled out naloxone access, saying: "I think that has had a huge, huge impact on our fatality numbers, quite frankly."

Rickard and other state and federal officials are not declaring victory, however. Gupta called for more federal funding to bolster prevention and treatment.

Some researchers are doubtful overdoses have peaked. Instead, they think a spike occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns and other restrictions isolated those with drug addictions and made treatment harder to get.

"We may just be returning to a pre-COVID level. I think we'll need at least a year more of data to confirm that," said Erin Winstanley, a West Virginia University researcher focused on the overdose epidemic's health effects.

The numbers are not close to pre-pandemic levels yet. Nationally, the July 2021-June 2022 estimated number of deaths is still more than 5% higher than the number in July 2020-June 2021, and 28% higher than in July 2019-June 2020.

Researchers have seen false plateaus before. Overdose deaths seemed to be leveling off for a couple of months in the spring of 2021 before rising again.

There may also be lessons from 2018. That year, there were about 67,000 U.S. drug overdose deaths, a 4% drop from 2017. The numbers were celebrated, with President Donald Trump declaring "we are curbing the opioid epidemic." Officials attributed the improvement to tougher policing, treatment program expansions, policies to limit opioid painkiller prescriptions and wider distribution of naloxone.

But some University of Pittsburgh researchers later concluded the improvement was largely the result of a 2017 change in China's regulation of the powerful opioid carfentanil. That change cut U.S. supplies of the drug and was followed by dramatic declines in overdose deaths in a handful of states.

Researchers who doubted that 2018 heralded the start of an enduring decline turned out to be right: The numbers rose in 2019 and then soared when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Dr. Donald Burke, former dean of Pitt's school of public health, was one of the authors of the carfentanil paper. He said he doesn't know what might explain the recent apparent decline, though he suggested that social isolation has lessened as the pandemic waned.

He said the longstanding rise in U.S. overdose deaths has mostly been steady, with occasional accelerations followed by slowdowns. He expects that grim pace to resume.

"You can't celebrate every time you see a slight downturn," he said.

HEADLINE	11/17 Day 267 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/17/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-267-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A missile that crashed inside south-eastern Poland, killing two, was probably a stray fired by Ukraine's air defences and not a Russian strike, Poland and Nato have said. Polish president, Andrzej Duda, said there is no evidence to suggest the missile was an intentional attack or was launched by Russia but was probably fired as part of Ukraine's air defences and "unfortunately fell on Polish territory". • Nato's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, confirmed that initial analysis suggested the incident was "likely caused by a Ukrainian air defence missile fired to defend Ukrainian territory" against Russian cruise missile attacks. "Let me be clear: this is not Ukraine's fault," he added. "Russia bears the ultimate responsibility as it continues its illegal war against Ukraine." Meanwhile Nato allies met in Brussels to discuss their reactions to the incident. • The US president, Joe Biden, also said the missile was unlikely to have been fired from Russia due to its trajectory. Biden's defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, said the US had not seen anything that contradicted Poland's preliminary assessment that Tuesday evening's missile was the result of a Ukrainian air defence missile. • Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has said he is convinced that the missile was not Ukrainian. Speaking to reporters, Zelenskyy said he had received reports from the command of Ukraine's armed forces and air force and "cannot but trust them". • Ukraine is requesting "immediate access" to the site of the explosion in eastern Poland, a senior Ukrainian defence official said. Oleksiy Danilov said Ukraine wanted a "joint study" of Tuesday's incident with its partners. Duda said both Poland and the US would have to agree before Ukraine could take part in the investigation. • The Russian defence ministry said that on Tuesday, it had not targeted anywhere within 35km (22 miles) of the Ukraine-Poland border. The ministry said statements about "Russian missiles" falling in Przewodów were "a deliberate provocation with the aim of escalating the situation". • Duda met US central intelligence agency director William Burns in Warsaw on Wednesday evening, the head of Poland's national security bureau said. Jacek Siewiera said the conversation "concerned the general security situation" and "the context of recent events came up." • The UK's prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has blamed Russian president Vladimir Putin's "cruel and unrelenting" war for destabilising the world economy, while calling for Nato allies to wait for the results of "a full investigation into the circumstances behind missiles falling in Poland yesterday". The British PM and his Canadian counterpart, Justin Trudeau, spoke with Zelenskyy and said in a readout afterwards that "whatever the outcome of that investigation [into the explosion in Poland], Putin's invasion of Ukraine is squarely to blame for the ongoing violence". • A vital deal allowing Russian and Ukrainian wheat and fertilisers to be exported through the Black Sea is expected to continue, according to the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The deal was scheduled to expire on Saturday but Erdoğan said he was confident the deal was going to be renewed for a year, bringing relief to some of the poorest countries in the world. • A draft declaration from G20 leaders said "most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine", and demanded Russia's "complete and unconditional withdrawal" from its neighbour's territory. The reference to war is a rejection of Russia's claim that it is involved in a "special military operation". But it also said "there were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions", reflecting the divisions among G20 states over Russia. • Ukrainian investigators have uncovered a claimed "torture room" in Kherson city where dozens of men were allegedly detained, electrocuted, beaten and some of them killed. Police said Russian soldiers took over the juvenile detention centre in around mid-March and turned it into a prison for men who refused to collaborate with them or who were accused of partisan activity.
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HEADLINE	11/17 Iran protests night of turmoil: 15 fatally shot
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/17/iran-protests-young-boy-among-deaths-night-of-turmoil-mahsa-amini
GIST	<p>As many as 15 people have been shot dead in Iran, including members of the security forces and a nine-year-old boy, in separate incidents as the country experienced one of its most serious and widespread nights of protests of the past nine weeks.</p> <p>On the anniversary of the 2019 uprising, state news agencies blamed terrorists on two motorcycles for the killing of seven people in a shopping centre in the southern city of Izeh Khuzesta. However, protesters said members of the Basij militia force ran amok, killing among others a nine-year-old boy sitting in a car with his father. State news agencies said two volunteer Basij patrolmen were among the dead, and 10 were injured.</p> <p>A further five people were killed in the Isfahan area, including security forces, in a separate shooting. Reports of further deaths in Kurdistan took the night's total death toll to 15.</p> <p>Internal Iranian news agencies followed the government line that unknown anti-government forces or Islamic State terrorists were responsible, but witnesses claimed unarmed civilians were shot.</p> <p>The total number of deaths during the latest protests has spiralled to 348, according to Harana, a human rights agency, though the figures are impossible to verify. In at least three cities, seminaries were set alight.</p> <p>Government news agencies said the killings might be a sign that the protests were turning into an armed insurrection. An investigation of the bullets in the bodies of those shot dead is to be held and there is now likely to be a massive propaganda battle in which the government will argue the protests are the seedbed for the "Syrianisation" of Iran, and a collapse of public order.</p> <p>Videos posted on social media showed shops closed in Tehran's Grand Bazaar as protesters chanted anti-government slogans. However, the state claims there is no enthusiasm for these strikes and that organised gangs were harassing hard pressed business owners into pulling down their shutters.</p> <p>The regime's difficulty, acknowledged by many reformist politicians and academics inside Iran, is that many protesters have long ago stopped taking their news from what they regard as utterly discredited official sources, and instead rely either on internal social media or international Farsi-speaking satellite broadcast channels, such as BBC Persian or Iran International.</p> <p>At least five protesters have now been officially sentenced to death, according to the media centre for the judiciary, one for allegedly setting fire to a government building.</p> <p>The protests began over the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, but have since transformed into a wider protest against the regime, that the French president, Emmanuel Macron, has likened to a revolution.</p> <p>Speaking in Bali on Wednesday, Macron said: "Something that has changed [on the ground in Iran] is this revolution of women, young people of Iran, defending universal values like gender equality. It's important to commend the courage and legitimacy of this fight."</p> <p>Iran's interior minister, Ahmad Vahidi, has claimed several alleged French intelligence agents have been arrested. He said: "People of other nationalities were arrested in the riots, some of whom played a big role. There were elements from the French intelligence agency and they will be dealt with according to the law."</p> <p>Seven French nationals were arrested, possibly a response to Macron meeting with exiled Iranians opposed to the regime.</p>

	<p>France is one of a group of western nations preparing to vote to censure Iran at a board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna this week. The motion condemns Iran over its failure to cooperate with UN nuclear inspectors over its nuclear program, saying Iran's uranium stockpile is now 18 times the limit set under the initial 2015 nuclear agreement.</p> <p>The US deputy envoy to the IAEA, Louis Bono, told the board on Wednesday the production of uranium with 60% enrichment by Iran had no valid peaceful justification.</p> <p>The IAEA director, Rafael Grossi, said on Wednesday the now six-month absence of UN inspectors meant there was now a mass of activity about which the IAEA did not know. He still hopes a visit to Tehran can be agreed. Iran has threatened to cancel any visit if the censure motion is passed.</p> <p>However, the west appears to be rethinking its entire strategy towards Iran, something Iran's political establishment is only starting to realise. The internal protests, and evidence that Iran has been supplying Russia with drones to help attack Ukraine, has left advocates of a revival of the nuclear deal struggling for political footing. So far criticism within Iran of the decision to take Russia's side over Ukraine, given the inevitable wider diplomatic impact, has not been forceful enough to challenge hardliners' grip on foreign policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Iran police open fire at Tehran metro station
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/16/iranian-police-open-fire-at-tehran-metro-station-and-beat-women-on-train
GIST	<p>Iranian security forces have opened fire on people at a metro station in Tehran and beaten women who were not wearing mandatory hair coverings as protests over the death of Mahsa Amini entered a third month.</p> <p>Footage shared on social media showed passengers running towards exits, with many falling and being trampled, after police opened fire on a crowded platform. Police were also filmed through train windows marching through carriages and beating women with batons.</p> <p>Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman of Kurdish origin, died in the custody of the morality police on 16 September after her arrest for an alleged breach of Iran's strict dress code for women.</p> <p>Demonstrations intensified on Tuesday, when protest organisers called for three days of action to commemorate "Bloody November" of 2019, when hundreds were killed during protests against raising fuel prices.</p> <p>"We'll fight! We'll die! We'll take back Iran!" dozens of protesters could be heard chanting around a bonfire on a Tehran street, in a video published by the 1500tasvir social media monitor. Protesters were also recorded chanting and setting headscarves on fire in metro stations. Agence France-Presse reported that six people had died around the country in overnight clashes.</p> <p>Metro stations and public transport – often patrolled by morality police – had become a site of state violence and surveillance of female citizens in the summer during a crackdown on female clothing.</p> <p>At the beginning of September, the secretary of Iran's headquarters for promoting virtue and preventing vice, Mohammad Saleh Hashemi Golpayegani, announced that the government was planning to use face recognition technology to target women recorded on public transport security cameras.</p> <p>In a separate development on Wednesday state media said at least five people had been killed in what it described as a terrorist attack at a market in the city of Izeh in the south-western province of Khuzestan.</p> <p>Iran's ethnic Arab minority, who mostly live in Khuzestan, have joined the protests triggered by Amini's death. "Five people were killed in the terrorist attack, including one child, one woman and three men," a</p>

	<p>local official Valiollah Hayati told state TV. The semi-official Isna news agency said two members of Iran's volunteer Basij militia were among those killed.</p> <p>The semi-official Tasnim news agency said the seminary school at Izeh was set on fire by anti-government protesters. Videos on social media showed the building on fire while gunshots could be heard. It was not possible to verify the circumstances in which people had died.</p> <p>More than 300 people have been killed by security forces over two months of protests, according to the Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR). The group says 15,000 people have been arrested, a figure the Iranian authorities deny.</p> <p>Five protesters have so far been sentenced to death. Earlier this month, 272 of Iran's 290 lawmakers voted to implement the death penalty for serious crimes against the state, and repeated demands by some officials to take a harder line against unrest that shows little sign of abating.</p> <p>The vote has become the subject of misleading information that all 15,000 of those arrested have been sentenced to death. The claim has been repeatedly posted on social media, including by high-profile people such as the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau.</p> <p>Nevertheless, a potential wave of executions is a serious concern. "We fear mass executions, unless the political cost of executions increases significantly," said Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, director of IHR.</p> <p>"The international community must send a strong warning to the Islamic republic that execution of protesters will have severe consequences."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Melting glaciers: 'vast' mass of microbes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/17/microbes-melting-glaciers-bacteria-ecosystems
GIST	<p>Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of bacteria are being released by melting glaciers, a study has shown.</p> <p>The microbes being washed downstream could fertilise ecosystems, the researchers said, but needed to be much better studied to identify any potential pathogens.</p> <p>The scientists said the rapid melting of the ice by the climate crisis meant the glaciers and the unique microbial ecosystems they harboured were "dying before our eyes", leaving researchers racing to understand them before they disappeared.</p> <p>Some of the microbes may also be a future source of useful biological molecules, such as new antibiotics.</p> <p>The scientists collected surface meltwaters from eight glaciers across Europe and North America and from two sites on the Greenland ice cap. They found tens of thousands of microbes in each millilitre of water.</p> <p>The data enabled them to estimate the bacteria and algae being flushed out would deliver an average of 650,000 tonnes of carbon a year for the next 80 years in the northern hemisphere, excluding the Himalaya Hindu Kush region, which was not sampled. This estimate assumes a continued modest rise in CO₂ emissions. If carbon emissions are cut, slowing global heating and ice melting, the mass of microbes released would be reduced by about a third.</p> <p>"We are seeing the glaciers die before our eyes, affecting the microbes that are there, with implications for us locally and globally," said Dr Arwyn Edwards, at Aberystwyth University in Wales, and part of the study team. "The mass of microbes released is vast even with moderate warming."</p> <p>"We don't have enough data to understand the value and the threat of these organisms. I routinely get inquiries about whether there is going to be a doomsday pathogen melting out of the glaciers. I think that's a very minor risk, but it's not a zero risk, so we need risk assessment of these microbes."</p>

Until recently, very little was known about the many thousands of microbial species inhabiting the surface of ice. Almost 1,000 [new species were revealed in Tibetan glaciers](#) in June. A consortium of researchers, the [Vanishing Glaciers Project](#) (VGP), is conducting expeditions around the world to collect samples and [assess this biodiversity](#).

Prof Tom Battin, at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne and part of VGP, said people should not be concerned about pathogens emerging from the ice. He also said most of the ice microbes did not seem to persist downstream.

Other recent research on viruses in Lake Hazen in Canada, the largest high Arctic freshwater lake in the world, suggested that [the risk of viruses spilling over](#) to new hosts was higher at locations close to where large amounts of glacial meltwater flowed in.

The new research, [published in the Nature Communications Earth and Environment journal](#), used surface meltwater samples from four glaciers in the European Alps, as well as glaciers in Canada, Sweden, Svalbard, and the western Greenland ice sheet.

The study found that hundreds of thousands of tonnes of microbes would be released every year in all future scenarios for global heating. The bacteria and algae usually contain pigments to protect themselves from damage from sunlight. But these dark pigments absorb sunlight, adding to warming and speeding up the destruction of their icy habitat.

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HEADLINE	11/16 US, Israel: Iran drone strikes oil tanker
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/nov/16/liberian-flagged-oil-tanker-owned-by-israeli-billionaire-hit-by-drone
GIST	<p>The US and Israel have pointed the finger at Iran after an oil tanker associated with an Israeli billionaire was struck by a bomb-carrying drone off the coast of Oman.</p> <p>The drone attack on the Liberian-flagged oil tanker Pacific Zircon happened on Tuesday night off the coast of Oman, a Middle East-based defence official told the Associated Press.</p> <p>The Pacific Zircon is operated by Singapore-based Eastern Pacific Shipping, which is a company ultimately owned by Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer. In a statement, Eastern Pacific Shipping said the Pacific Zircon, carrying gas oil, had been “hit by a projectile” 150 miles (240km) off the coast of Oman.</p> <p>“We are in communication with the vessel and there are no reports of injuries or pollution. All crew are safe and accounted for,” the company said. “There is some minor damage to the vessel’s hull but no spillage of cargo or water ingress.”</p> <p>The White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said in a statement: “Upon review of the available information, we are confident that Iran likely conducted this attack using a UAV,” referring to an unmanned aerial vehicle or drone.</p> <p>An Israeli official said it appeared Iran carried out the attack with a Shahed-136 exploding drone. Iran has supplied those drones to Russia, which has been using them to target infrastructure and civilian targets in Ukraine. “It is an Iranian attack, there is a consensus on this in the Israeli intelligence and defence community,” the official said.</p> <p>Iran’s government did not acknowledge the attack on the Pacific Zircon. Iran’s mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p>

The strike came hours after the US navy announced it had found 70 tonnes of a missile fuel component hidden among bags of fertiliser on a ship bound for Yemen from Iran, a major seizure potentially disrupting the Iranian-backed Houthis' ballistic missile programme.

Oil prices rose slightly as news of the attack spread, with benchmark Brent crude trading above \$94 a barrel.

Later on Wednesday, Greek officials said two Greek oil tankers, Delta Poseidon and Prudent Warrior, held by Tehran since May, had been freed, along with their sailors.

Tracking data from MarineTraffic.com showed the vessels sailing away from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, where they had been held since May after being seized in a helicopter raid by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guards.

Their seizure came after Greece assisted the US in seizing oil days earlier from the Iranian-flagged tanker Lana.

"Today is a very pleasant day for our sailors, but also for Greece in general, since an unpleasant and particularly complex case came to an end, following systematic efforts by the Greek government," the Greek shipping minister, Giannis Plakiotakis, said in a statement.

Tehran did not immediately acknowledge the ships' release. Both vessels appeared to be heading to the United Arab Emirates.

While no one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack off the coast of Oman, suspicion immediately fell on Iran. Tehran and Israel have for years been engaged in a shadow war in the wider Middle East, with some drone attacks targeting Israeli-associated vessels travelling around the region.

The US also blamed Iran for a series of attacks occurring off the coast of the UAE in 2019. Tehran at the time had begun escalating its nuclear programme following the unilateral US withdrawal from Iran's atomic deal with world powers.

In 2021, a suspected Iranian drone struck the Israeli-associated oil tanker Mercer Street off Oman, killing two people onboard.

Since the collapse of Iran's nuclear deal, nonproliferation experts warn it now has enough enriched uranium to make at least one nuclear weapon if it chose to, though Tehran insists its programme is peaceful.

Iran also has been lashing out at its perceived enemies abroad amid nationwide protests now challenging its theocracy.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Consumers strength: jump in retail sales
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-economy-retail-sales-october-2022-11668555581?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>U.S. retail sales rose sharply in October, a sign of economic strength that leaves the Federal Reserve likely to keep raising interest rates as it tries to reduce persistently high inflation.</p> <p>Retail sales rose a seasonally adjusted 1.3% in October compared with September, when they were unchanged, the Commerce Department said Wednesday.</p> <p>Shoppers spent more on increasingly expensive everyday staples such as gasoline and food, but they also shelled out more on discretionary items such as cars, furniture and restaurant meals. Some of the spending was due to purchases of building materials and home furnishings in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, economists said.</p>

The jump in sales showed households continued to have the resources to increase their spending despite inflation running close to a four-decade high, climbing interest rates and economic uncertainty. Many households built up savings earlier in the pandemic thanks to trillions of dollars in government stimulus, fewer opportunities to spend, and higher wages. Jobs also remain plentiful, despite an increase in layoffs in some sectors such as tech.

Retailers also [started discounting early](#) ahead of the traditional holiday shopping season, and some economists said strong October sales could harbingers less consumer spending later in the year.

“Maybe they are trying to get more of their shopping done ahead of time,” said Veronica Clark, an economist at [Citigroup](#) Inc. “That is taking spending away from December and November and shifting it to October.”

[Walmart](#) Inc. reported Tuesday that [comparable U.S. sales rose](#) in its third quarter compared with a year earlier. [Home Depot](#) Inc. also reported higher comparable sales for the same period [as big-ticket transactions rose](#) and as consumers choose to renovate their homes instead of moving because of rising interest rates. [Target](#) Corp., on the other hand, said [shoppers pulled back in recent weeks](#), cutting into sales in their latest quarter.

Unlike many government reports, retail sales aren’t adjusted for inflation and can reflect price differences in addition to purchase totals. The report also offers a partial picture of consumer demand because it doesn’t include spending on services such as travel, housing and utilities. The Commerce Department will release new [household spending figures](#) covering goods and services at the end of November.

The Fed is raising rates at the most aggressive pace since the early 1980s to [combat inflation](#) by cooling spending, hiring and investment.

Strong consumer demand, robust job growth and rising wages are making that task more difficult—meaning officials could have to lift [rates higher and keep them there longer](#).

Kansas City Fed President Esther George said Tuesday that inflation is at risk [of growing entrenched](#) in the economy due to an overheated job market, and that will make it increasingly difficult for the central bank to lower inflation without a recession.

“I’m looking at a labor market that is so tight, I don’t know how you continue to bring this level of inflation down without having some real slowing, and maybe we even have contraction in the economy to get there,” Ms. George [said in an interview](#) Tuesday, before the release of the retail-sales report.

Fed governor Christopher Waller said Wednesday it was too soon to conclude inflation had peaked or that the central bank would be able to end its rate increases early next year.

U.S. economic growth and wage gains need to slow for the Fed to be confident that its rate increases will reduce inflation, Mr. Waller said in Phoenix speech after release of the retail sales report.

Mr. Waller pointed to periods this summer and one year ago in which inflation pressures appeared to be easing, only to reaccelerate. “We’ve seen this movie before, so it is too early to know if it will have a different ending this time,” he said.

Consumers as of mid-2022 still had around \$1.7 trillion in excess savings—the amount above and beyond what they would have saved if income and spending had grown in line with the prepandemic economy, according to Fed economists.

But they also are supporting their spending with increased use of credit cards. A separate report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York said credit card balances increased by 15% in the third quarter compared with a year ago, the biggest increase in two decades.

Retail sales—which includes spending mostly on goods such as clothing, wine and ottomans but also meals at restaurants—have generally risen in recent months. Consumers spent more in October at auto dealers, furniture stores, grocery stores and gasoline stations.

Inflation eased in October to the slowest pace since January but remained elevated. [Prices rose 7.7%](#) in October from the same month a year before, the Labor Department said last week, slowing from 9.1% in June, which was the highest in four decades.

The consumer-price index rose a seasonally adjusted 0.4% in October from September, meaning that retail sales growth outpaced the rate of price increases.

Some categories that saw a burst of pandemic-related buying in recent years continued to show signs of easing. Sales at electronics stores declined, for instance.

Economists and executives are closely watching consumer spending in the early weeks of the important holiday selling season with some retailers starting holiday promotions earlier this year. Black Friday, a key shopping holiday, is next week.

Alana Carr, the part-owner of four specialty retailers in Washington state, said her toy store, gift shops and jewelry retailer have all done so far well this year, with overall sales up by double-digits compared with 2021.

“We are on track to have our best year ever,” she said.

Ms. Carr said she has been ready for the holiday shopping season since September. She ordered products early to avoid the shortages she experienced last year. But she said she is worried that sales might be a bit softer during the holiday period because of the economic uncertainty and inflation eating into consumer budgets.

Greg Hughes, president of an Indianapolis-based distributor and manufacturer of board games, is concerned some of his retail customers are overstocked, in a contrast to shortages last year. Mr. Hughes said he is closely watching for a surge in last-minute orders right after Black Friday, as was typical in the years before the pandemic.

“Black Friday tells so much about where things are,” he said. “If we see a trickle, then the cautious side is the one that is prevailing.”

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HEADLINE	11/17 UN: Russia to renew Ukraine grain deal
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-agrees-to-renew-ukraine-grain-deal-u-n-says-11668673937?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>Moscow agreed to renew an arrangement with Ukraine, Turkey and the United Nations that allows for the export of Ukrainian agricultural products through the war-torn Black Sea region, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said.</p> <p>“I welcome the agreement by all parties to continue the Black Sea Grain Initiative,” Mr. Guterres said in a statement.</p> <p>Grain prices fell sharply after the U.N. announcement. Wheat prices dropped 1.7% to \$8.04 a bushel and corn prices were down close to 1% to \$6.59 a bushel.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a tweet that the “Grain Deal will be prolonged,” calling it a “key decision in the global fight against the food crisis.”</p>

Moscow hasn't announced a renewal of [the deal](#), which was set to expire this weekend. Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported that a decision from Moscow is likely Thursday.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who played a key role in orchestrating the original deal, said Wednesday at a summit of the Group of 20 countries in Indonesia that Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) had signaled he was open to an extension.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the prolonged agreement had new terms or was an extension of the original pact.

Moscow has pushed for Ukraine to allow for the export of Russian ammonia through a pipeline across the country. Ukrainian officials have been reluctant, citing safety concerns about storing the material at the pipeline's terminus in Odessa, as well as political sensitivity within Ukraine.

"The United Nations is also fully committed to removing the remaining obstacles to exporting food and fertilizers from the Russian Federation," Mr. Guterres said.

Mr. Guterres has faced challenges in winning and preserving agreement between Kyiv and Moscow during the war, even though nations around the world have pressed Russia, which has attacked Ukrainian port cities, to clear a path for food supplies.

"The Black Sea Grain Initiative continues to demonstrate the importance of discreet diplomacy in the context of finding multilateral solutions," Mr. Guterres said.

The grain agreement, signed by Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the U.N. in July, allowed Ukraine to resume shipping food products through three Black Sea ports after a monthslong Russian blockade that triggered fears of a deepening global food crisis. The deal has helped Ukraine to resume shipping wheat, corn and other products at nearly prewar levels, bringing global prices down.

Russia briefly suspended its role in the grain agreement in late October, threatening to bring the maritime corridor to a halt. Moscow rejoined the deal days later following negotiations with the U.N. and Turkey.

Mr. Putin has threatened to abandon the grain agreement in recent months, arguing that not enough of the grain was being shipped to poor countries. U.N. data showed that some 28% of grain shipped under the initiative went to lower-income nations, including humanitarian shipments to Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Russian officials have also sought action to facilitate exports of Russian food and fertilizer products. Western countries haven't sanctioned those exports, but sanctions might have created obstacles to financing and shipping Russian agricultural products, U.N. officials said.

A looming weekend deadline for the deal's renewal had weighed on Ukraine's vast farming community. The deal has effectively reopened their key export route. Before the war, farmers shipped over 95% of their products through the Black Sea.

"For the likes of my company, it is critical," said Oleh Bakhmatyuk, the chairman of UkrLandFarming, one of Ukraine's biggest farming groups. "If farmers can't sell, they can't plant and sow again, so there is a knock on effect."

Some farmers had hoped that a new deal would go further than the previous one. Ukraine had at one stage pushed to broaden the deal to include the ports of Mykolaiv, which are among the largest in Ukraine and shipped 35% of the country's food exports before the war.

"Without access to these ports, exporters have to use alternative routes by road and river that are much slower and, in some cases, 10 to 40 times more expensive," said Andriy Vadatursky, chief executive of Mykolaiv-based grain trader Nibulon Ltd.

HEADLINE	11/16 UK: domestic threats by Iran, Russia, China
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/world/europe/uk-threats-iran-russia-china.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — Iran has tried to kill or kidnap at least 10 critics based in Britain since the start of the year, the head of the British security service said on Wednesday as he underscored perceived threats from a diverse range of sources, including Russia, China and Islamist and far-right terrorists at home.</p> <p>Giving an annual update of security risks to Britain, Ken McCallum, the director general of MI5, described Iran as the state actor that “most frequently crosses into terrorism,” and one willing to resort to violence to silence its opponents.</p> <p>The disclosure followed assertions that two British-based journalists working for a TV station, Iran International, had been informed by London’s Metropolitan Police of threats to their lives. That disclosure prompted an official warning from Britain’s foreign ministry to Iran’s most senior diplomat in London.</p> <p>But against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and rising tensions with China, Mr. McCallum acknowledged that Britain’s intelligence services faced a challenge in setting priorities. For example, it must balance efforts to stop “teenage would-be terrorists radicalized in extreme right-wing spaces online” against protecting Britain’s “military secrets from Russian cyberhackers.”</p> <p>The complexity of the multiple threats the country faces was, he said, “huge.”</p> <p>Peter Neumann, a professor of security studies at King’s College London, said the increased activity from Iranian agents was most likely linked to concerns about the growing protest movement within the country.</p> <p>He added that the range of threats cited by Mr. McCallum illustrated a change in the focus of British security services in recent years — away from Islamist terrorism toward a broader range of actors.</p> <p>“You can feel the difference — that speech would not have been given in that way in 2020 or even 2021,” Professor Neumann said. “It has been a rapid shift, a real change,” he added, noting that while the threat from Islamist terrorism still persisted, it “feels like it has decreased a lot.”</p> <p>Much of the speech, delivered at MI5’s headquarters in London, focused on threats from Russia, whose aggression, Mr. McCallum said, would challenge Britain for years to come.</p> <p>Western nations are responding, he said, noting that 600 Russian officials — of whom 400 were judged to be spies — had been expelled from Europe in what he called “the most significant strategic blow against the Russian intelligence services in recent European history.”</p> <p>The scale of those expulsions, together with the rollout of Western economic sanctions designed to isolate Russia, had proved a surprisingly potent test for Russia’s president, Vladimir V. Putin, he added.</p> <p>Well before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Britain was especially sensitive to the activities of Russian agents, and its pushback against Moscow’s spy networks intensified after the nerve agent poisoning of Sergei V. Skripal, the former Russian agent, and his daughter, Yulia, in Salisbury, England, in 2018.</p> <p>Since that episode prompted Britain to expel 23 Russian diplomats on espionage grounds, it has refused 100 diplomatic visa applications from Moscow.</p> <p>But Russia is continuing to use an extensive range of disruptive tactics, including cyberattacks, disinformation, espionage and interference in democratic processes. It has also sought to deploy the wealth of its oligarchs, many of them British-based, to peddle influence.</p> <p>Tensions with China have also increased lately. But in contrast to Moscow, Beijing appears to be playing a more subtle and strategic “long game,” Mr. McCallum said. Not only is it seeking to co-opt and influence</p>

Britain's lawmakers across the political divide, but it is also cultivating contacts early in their careers in public life, hoping to build a debt of obligation to exploit later.

Nonetheless, opponents among the Chinese diaspora in Britain have been subject to the sort of harassment and coercion seen recently when a pro-democracy protester was attacked at the Chinese Consulate in Manchester. In that clash, the protester, a supporter of democracy in Hong Kong, said he was dragged inside the consulate grounds by masked men and then kicked and punched.

As for Islamist and far-right homegrown terrorism, the authorities have foiled 37 planned attacks since 2017, including eight in the past 12 months, MI5 said.

Investigations of Islamist terrorism make up around three-quarters of the British security service's terror-related caseload. Even relatively unsophisticated plots have proved deadly, including the fatal stabbing of the Conservative Party lawmaker David Amess in 2021 in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, east of London.

Terrorism motivated by extreme right-wing ideology has continued to evolve away from structured groups toward a more diffuse online threat, Mr. McCallum said.

"From the comfort of their bedrooms, individuals are easily able to access right-wing extremist spaces, network with each other and move toward a radical mind-set," he said.

Investigators have seen increased efforts among right-wing agitators to gain access to weapons, particularly firearms, including homemade or 3-D printed models.

"We are seeing growing numbers of right-wing extremist influencers, operating globally, fueling grievances and amplifying conspiracy theories," said Mr. McCallum. "This problem feels like it will endure."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Climate toll: disasters common across US
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/climate/climate-change-county-natural-disaster.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The rising toll of climate change across the United States has been measured in lives lost, buildings destroyed and dollars spent on recovery. But a report released on Wednesday uses a different measure: Which parts of the country have suffered the greatest number of federally declared disasters?</p> <p>That designation is reserved for disasters so severe, they overwhelm the ability of state and local officials to respond. The report finds that disasters like these have become alarmingly common.</p> <p>From 2011 to the end of last year, 90 percent of U.S. counties have experienced a flood, hurricane, wildfire or other calamity serious enough to receive a federal disaster declaration, according to the report, and more than 700 counties suffered five or more such disasters. During that same period, 29 states had, on average, at least one federally declared disaster a year somewhere within their borders. Five states have experienced at least 20 disasters since 2011.</p> <p>The numbers exclude disaster declarations related to the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>"Climate change is here," said Amy Chester, the managing director of Rebuild by Design, a nonprofit that helps communities recover from disasters, and which prepared the report. "Every single taxpayer is paying for climate change."</p> <p>That doesn't mean climate change is hitting every part of the country to the same degree. Wealthy and populous cities are often better able to sustain the shock of extreme weather events. By focusing on federally declared disasters, the report is able to equalize those differences, offering something close to a true accounting of which places are most exposed to climate shocks they cannot cope with on their own.</p>

At the top of that list are five counties that have each experienced, on average, more than a disaster a year since 2011. Those counties are concentrated in two areas: Southern Louisiana (where counties are called parishes) and eastern Kentucky.

Louisiana outpaces the rest of the United States in another regard. Over the past decade, the state has received more federal disaster money per capita — \$1,736 for each resident — than anywhere else in the nation, the report found. Only New York State comes close, at \$1,348.

But the burden of climate shocks extends beyond the Gulf Coast and Appalachia. Since 2011, California has received 25 federal disaster declarations, including for wildfires in 2017 and 2018 that resulted in \$2.5 billion in federal money to rebuild public infrastructure. Mississippi and Oklahoma have each suffered 22 disasters. Iowa has had 21, mostly for severe storms and flooding.

Even in states not typically associated with extreme weather, some counties have had frequent calamities. Fairfield County, Conn., which includes Greenwich and Stamford, has received eight federal disaster declarations since 2011. Grafton County, in central New Hampshire, has had seven. Morris County, N.J., 30 miles west of Manhattan, has had nine.

Not every type of disaster is associated with climate change. For example, it's [unclear whether there is a link](#) between rising temperatures and earthquakes. But scientists have become increasingly convinced that a warming world is contributing to worsening floods, hurricanes, wildfires and other extreme weather events.

The data also shows the areas least exposed to unmanageable climate shocks, at least so far. States in the Midwest, including Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, are among those with the smallest number of federal disaster declarations, with an average of roughly one disaster every two years.

But the authors of the report say that just because a state has had fewer federal disaster declarations doesn't mean it has gotten through the past decade largely unscathed.

At the bottom of the list is Nevada, which has had just three federal disaster declarations since 2011. Next door, Arizona has had just six. Yet, Nevada and Arizona ranked highest for heat-related deaths from 2018 to 2021, according to the report.

"Heat has the highest mortality of all climate impacts, but their disaster declarations were so low," Ms. Chester said. The reason: Federal disaster declarations focus on property damage more than direct human consequences like illness, injury or death.

Still, the prevalence of federally declared disasters remains one tool for gauging the effects of climate change.

The report shows the importance of doing more to increase community resilience, said Victoria Salinas, the acting deputy administrator for resilience at the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "By better understanding risk," she said, "we can more effectively take action together to accelerate resilience and adaptation in our nation's most at-risk and disadvantaged communities."

To pay for that new spending, Rebuild by Design proposes, states should impose a 2 percent surcharge on insurance premiums.

The American Property Casualty Insurance Association, which represents insurers, rejected the proposal, saying it could make insurance less affordable and potentially lead some people to not carry enough coverage to recover from disasters. Adding a surcharge to insurance policies "is the wrong approach," Don Griffin, a vice president at the association, said in a statement.

	<p>Using an insurance surtax to pay for disasters is a strategy that is already in use, in a sense. As the report notes, Florida levies surcharges on private insurance policies to make up for shortfalls in its state-run insurance program — something that’s likely to happen in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian.</p> <p>Rebuild by Design suggests reversing the chronology. Rather than taxing insurance payments to pay for disaster recovery, a state would come up with additional funds before a storm, then use that money to better prepare communities before a disaster strikes, perhaps making it unnecessary for the federal government to declare a disaster at all.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 COP27: how hot nations allow Earth to get?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/climate/cop27-global-warming-1-5-celsius.html
GIST	<p>SHARM EL SHEIKH, Egypt — At last year’s global climate talks in Glasgow, world leaders, scientists and chief executives rallied around a call to “keep 1.5 alive.”</p> <p>The mantra was in reference to an aspirational goal that every government endorsed in the 2015 Paris climate agreement: try to stop global average temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels. Beyond that threshold, scientists say, the risk of climate catastrophes increases significantly.</p> <p>Now, 1.5 is hanging on for dear life.</p> <p>At the United Nations climate summit that is underway in this Red Sea town, countries are clashing over whether they should continue to aim for the 1.5-degree target.</p> <p>The United States and the European Union both say that any final agreement at the summit, known as COP27, should underscore the importance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees.</p> <p>But a few nations, including China, have so far resisted efforts to reaffirm the 1.5-degree goal, according to negotiators from several industrialized countries. Failing to do so would be a major departure from last year’s climate pact and, to some, a tacit admission of defeat.</p> <p>“When I arrived here, I got a really strong sense of backsliding,” said Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland who leads a group of prominent former leaders called the Elders. Along with leaders of nearly 200 of the world’s largest businesses and civil society groups, Ms. Robinson signed a letter urging governments at the climate talks to stick with 1.5 degrees.</p> <p>That temperature goal is “a limit of safe living,” Ms. Robinson said, adding, “Every increase of a tiny fraction of a degree is harmful, and we have to claw to prevent going above 1.5.”</p> <p>For some nations, the dispute goes beyond digits. Leaders of low-lying island nations say vast swaths of their territories could wash away if global average temperatures were to surpass 1.5 degrees. “This is indeed a matter of survival for all vulnerable countries,” Kwaku Afriyie, Ghana’s environment minister, said.</p> <p>At a gathering of the world’s 20 largest economies that is taking place in Bali, Indonesia, this week, leaders said they were resolved “to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius,” putting pressure on the diplomats at the climate talks in Egypt.</p> <p>But with global carbon dioxide emissions reaching a record high this year, some negotiators fear that regardless of what is agreed to on paper, the 1.5-degree goal could soon be out of reach. The planet has already warmed an average of 1.1 degrees Celsius, compared with preindustrial levels, and under the current policies of national governments, the world is on pace to heat up 2.1 to 2.9 degrees Celsius this century, according to a recent U.N. report.</p>

“The goal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees is on life support,” Prime Minister Philip Davis of the Bahamas said in a speech to world leaders at the Egyptian conference. “This is a hard truth for many to admit, because even the best-case scenarios will mean almost unimaginable upheaval and tragedy.”

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February set off a global energy scramble that has complicated efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels. As natural gas prices soared, countries in Europe and elsewhere switched to burning coal, an even dirtier fossil fuel, and began investing in new natural gas pipelines and terminals that could operate for decades to come. Russian fuel exports continued as well, despite Western sanctions, simply heading to different trading partners. In the United States, Republicans continue to call for expanded oil and gas production and exploration. Fossil fuel companies have even made a number of gas deals with nations at COP27.

All of that could make limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees virtually impossible, Al Gore, the former U.S. vice president, said in a speech on the opening day of the Egyptian summit.

“The world’s leading scientists and energy experts have told us that any new fossil fuel development is incompatible with 1.5 degrees as the limit to the temperature increase,” he said.

The Paris Agreement includes some ambiguity over what the world’s exact climate goals should be. The pact [said](#) that nations should commit to keeping global warming “well below” 2 degrees Celsius while “pursuing efforts” to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Half a degree doesn’t sound like much, but every fraction of a degree of additional warming [could mean](#) tens of millions more people worldwide exposed to life-threatening heat waves, water shortages and coastal flooding, scientists have found. A 1.5-degree world might still have coral reefs and summer Arctic sea ice, while a 2-degree world most likely would not.

The consequences are “massively different in terms of food security and the ability to grow crops in certain parts of the world, and in terms of the number of people that are exposed to extreme floodplain risk and extreme heat risk,” Raj Shah, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, said.

Yet, at this point, keeping warming to 1.5 degrees would require drastic steps that would be costly, politically difficult and disruptive, and would require leaders of nearly all countries to act in concert. They would need to slash their collective fossil fuel emissions roughly in half by 2030, and then quit adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere altogether by 2050, scientists [have calculated](#). That would require a complete overhaul of all electricity and transportation systems at an unprecedented pace. And with every year of inaction, the task gets harder.

By comparison, to keep warming to 2 degrees, nations would have an extra decade to cut their emissions in half.

China, the world’s largest emitter, has several concerns about the 1.5 goal, said Li Shuo, a policy adviser for Greenpeace based in Beijing. It would put pressure on the Chinese government to adopt a more stringent domestic target for cutting greenhouse gases, something it wants to avoid, he said. And if the United States were to withdraw from the global fight against climate change, as it did under President Donald J. Trump, China would be left carrying the load alone.

“There is this skepticism about the United States’ ability to fulfill its promise,” Mr. Li said. “The U.S. could just walk away, citing congressional resistance, and on the other side, the Chinese will be held more accountable.”

The Chinese delegation at COP27 did not respond to a request for comment.

India, the world’s third-largest emitter, has in the past been wary of focusing too much on the 1.5-degree target. To meet that goal, Indian officials [have said](#), richer countries would have to cut their emissions much more rapidly than they are doing and provide more financial aid to poor nations, potentially on the

order of trillions of dollars, to help them shift to clean energy. So far, wealthy governments have failed to do that.

The Indian delegation at COP27 declined to comment.

Some world leaders seem increasingly pessimistic that the 1.5 climate goal will be met even if nations do endorse the target. Words on paper, after all, don't cut emissions.

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados is [leading a campaign](#) to reform the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in order to unlock more money to help developing economies pivot from fossil fuels. She said that it wasn't enough to chant "1.5 to Stay Alive" in hopes that it would bring about change.

"I take no pride in being associated with having to repeat it over and over and over," she said.

Instead, she said, after [a year of record storms](#), floods, fires and droughts, nations must do the hard work of cutting carbon dioxide, methane and other gases that are trapping heat in the atmosphere.

For the determined optimists, however, there are glimmers of hope.

This year, Mr. Biden muscled through the Inflation Reduction Act, America's first major climate legislation, which will pour \$370 billion into low-carbon technologies like wind turbines, solar panels, nuclear power plants, hydrogen fuels, electric vehicles and electric heat pumps. It is projected to help the country cut its emissions by 40 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

In a speech at the climate summit, Mr. Biden called on other nations to follow his lead and come up with plans to reduce their planet warming emissions quickly.

"If we're going to win this fight, every major emitter nation needs align with the 1.5 degrees," Mr. Biden said. "We can no longer plead ignorance to the consequences of our actions or continue to repeat our mistakes."

Another recent development that has cheered those who believe 1.5 is still possible was the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a committed environmentalist, as the president of Brazil. Mr. Lula, who is scheduled to speak at the climate summit on Wednesday, has [pledged to protect](#) the Amazon rainforest.

Mr. Lula ousted Jair Bolsonaro, who cut environmental programs and oversaw a sharp rise in deforestation.

"There is an opportunity to protect the Amazon rainforest, which is critical for protecting our global climate," said Leila Salazar-Lopez, the executive director of Amazon Watch, a nonprofit organization. "If the Brazilian election would have gone the other way, then I think we would definitely be beyond a tipping point and we would not have a chance for 1.5."

The International Energy Agency [has also predicted](#) that the energy crisis incited by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will spur more nations to invest in lower-emissions technologies this decade in order to improve their energy security. Global investment in clean energy is now expected to rise from \$1.3 trillion this year to more than \$2 trillion annually by 2030, though that is still only half of what is needed to hold warming to 1.5 degrees.

"The science shows us that we can actually turn things around if we stop fossil fuel expansion and carbon emissions," Osprey Orielle Lake, the executive director of the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, said. "It's like an 11th-hour save, but we can't give up."

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SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/despite-successes-ukraine-faces-tough-slog-russia/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — The war is far from over in Ukraine with a long winter ahead.</p> <p>Analysts who once warned that Ukraine stood little chance of holding out for long against a bigger, better-armed enemy now say Kyiv must be wary of overconfidence and overestimation of the difficulties that lie ahead against a potent Russian occupying force.</p> <p>The stunning Ukrainian counteroffensive against invading Russian forces that began this summer has been widely hailed as a resounding, if not decisive, “turning point” in the war. Yet even as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was visiting a newly liberated Kherson this week and vowing to press his forces’ advantage, a contrarian, far more sober assessment emerged.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces can boast of a string of victories since the summer — in Izyum, Lyman, Kharkiv and now Kherson — and the government in Kyiv has not been shy about touting its successes and highlighting Russian atrocities and battlefield mistakes.</p> <p>The Ukrainians encouraged Western media to visit the liberated countryside around Lyman. They pointed to the destroyed convoys and piles of Russian dead on the roads as examples of their success. They also released intercepts of cellphone conversations between panic-stricken soldiers to stoke rumors of a potential Russian collapse.</p> <p>Still, the Russian army is entrenched in large parts of Ukraine’s disputed Donbas region, and the battle lines in the eastern portion of Ukraine have stabilized as the daily artillery bombardments along the front line continue. As the Russian forces pulled back, they shortened and strengthened supply lines, presenting a more compact and formidable force for the looming winter.</p> <p>Ukrainian soldiers who have just returned to the Kyiv area from the front in the east are giving reality checks to the largely positive media coverage.</p> <p>One Ukrainian leader described the intense Russian artillery fire as his small, lightly armed company took part in the offensive to recapture Izyum and occasional chaos as hastily assembled and underequipped Ukrainian forces attempted to push forward against Russian armored units.</p> <p>Lacking anti-tank missiles such as the U.S.-supplied Javelin and other supporting weapons, the officer said, the Ukrainian units sustained high casualties in spite of the overall success of the counteroffensive.</p> <p>Some skeptics say glowing reports of Ukrainian successes obscure the Russians’ formidable position and their separatist Ukrainian allies.</p> <p>By any measure, as the invasion nears the nine-month mark, Russia has gained and maintained a significant amount of territory in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. Although Ukrainians have recovered large swaths of this territory, it is a minor fraction of the overall ground still occupied by the Russians.</p> <p>“The Russians know how to fight,” Ukrainian Maj. Roman Kovalev, who is leading a newly configured 500-member battalion on the southern front, recently told NPR. “They learn fast. They’re not the same forces as they were in the spring. It is hard to fight them.”</p> <p>A close look at the map reveals that the amount of territory that the Ukrainians regained in September and October barely exceeds, if at all, the amount of ground captured by the Russians during their phase 2 offensive in June and July.</p> <p>During that offensive, Russian forces captured Izyum and Severodonetsk, the de facto capital of the Luhansk region, as well as its sister city Lysychansk. The latter two cities remain firmly under Russian control, far behind the front lines.</p>

Another critical aspect of the battle in the east is the fighting along the south Donbas front, centered largely on the city of Bakhmut. Along the eastern Donbas front, the Ukrainian line forms a salient to the east, anchored in the north at Izyum, extending east and anchored in the south on Bakhmut.

In the south, the Russian pressure on the Ukrainian line has been relentless and continues to advance slowly, even while the Ukrainians were on the offensive to the north. Now, in spite of the loss of Izyum, with the reestablishment of the line to the north, the Russian offensive against Bakhmut is gaining momentum.

In recent weeks, Russian forces have made significant gains and have begun to encircle the shell-torn city. Ukrainian units attempting to hold the line around Bakhmut report almost continuous Russian attacks and heavy casualties on both sides.

The stakes are high. The road network supporting the southern portion of Russian-occupied territory along much of Ukraine's southern coastline runs through the Bakhmut area, and control is key to Russian operations there. The coming weeks will be critical in the battle for Bakhmut and with it the Donbas region.

Analysts caution that the significance of the recent Ukraine counteroffensive must be measured not just in terms of square miles and towns liberated, or even casualties. It must be viewed within the context of the overall strategic situation in the eastern Donbas area and the occupied southern coast.

While the Ukrainian armed forces have repeatedly demonstrated skill and resolve against a much larger opponent, the Russian position, being fortified by some 300,000 reservists called up by President Vladimir Putin, is strong, and the Russian pressure on the Ukrainian line in many areas remains relentless.

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HEADLINE	11/16 CDC: spike in Black, Hispanic suicides
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/cdc-reports-unprecedented-spike-black-hispanic-sui/
GIST	<p>Long-term U.S. suicide trends changed heading into the pandemic, as rates fell steadily among Whites for the first time and rose among Blacks and Hispanics, according to federal data released Wednesday.</p> <p>Suicide rates for non-Hispanic Whites fell 7%, from 18.1 for every 100,000 people in 2018 to 16.9 for every 100,000 in 2020, after increasing steadily since 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.</p> <p>From 2007 to 2020, suicide rates for non-Hispanic Blacks increased by 39%, from 5.6 for every 100,000 people to 7.8 for every 100,000, after years of steady decline, according to a data brief from the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.</p> <p>Among Hispanics, suicide rates rose by 29%, from 5.8 for every 100,000 people in 2012 to 7.5 for every 100,000 in 2020, after remaining stable for years.</p> <p>"Suicide rates in the United States have traditionally been higher for non-Hispanic White than non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic people," the CDC said.</p> <p>The changes likely arise from increases in clinical depression, substance abuse and social isolation among Blacks and Hispanics, who also worry more about racism than Whites, said clinical psychologist Thomas Plante, a member of the American Psychological Association.</p> <p>"Certainly, people of color often have special challenges living with racism and discrimination that seem to have escalated in recent years during our very turbulent and divisive times," said Mr. Plante, a Santa Clara University professor. "Also, many people of color live in lower socioeconomic environments, and so the turmoil associated with the pandemic, inflation and economic disparity may be contributing factors too."</p>

Only time will tell whether the change persists, said social psychologist Brett Pelham, a professor at Montgomery College in Maryland. He said suicide risks tend to be highest in successful people who suddenly face “some kind of personal or financial crisis.”

“Suicide is a very unusual social problem because it is one of the rare areas in which highly advantaged people typically do worse than their less-advantaged peers,” Mr. Pelham said. “For example, it would be important to see if the Black and Latino Americans whose risk for suicide increased over time were those who were actually doing better financially than many of their same-race peers.”

Other reports have shown suicide risks rising among minorities during the pandemic.

Mental Health America’s online screening program found that Blacks, American Indians and Hispanics reported the highest increases in suicidal thoughts from 2019 to 2021. Suicidal thoughts rose 9% among Blacks, 7% among American Indians or Alaska Natives and 7% among Hispanics during that period.

“There are many factors at play, including that Black screeners were more likely than screeners of any other race or ethnicity to report racism and financial problems as main concerns for their mental health,” said Maddy Reinert, senior director of population health at Mental Health America, a Virginia-based nonprofit.

Jane Pearson, a special adviser to the director on suicide research at the National Institute of Mental Health, said the CDC numbers confirm research she published last year that showed suicide growing among young minorities.

“It’s important to understand that those trends have continued into 2020 and 2021,” Ms. Pearson said.

The CDC report found that gun suicide rates among Blacks increased by 56% from 2015 to 2020 and by 38% among Hispanics from 2013 to 2020 after long-term declines for both. Among Whites, the gun suicide rate fell slightly from 2018 to 2020.

Suffocation suicide rates followed a similar pattern, falling among Whites while rising among Blacks and Hispanics. Poisoning suicides remained stable among Blacks and Hispanics but declined among Whites.

“After widening over most of the period due to greater percentage increases among non-Hispanic White people, differences in rates between non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic people for all three leading methods of suicide have narrowed since 2017-2018,” said Sally Curtin, the CDC statistician who wrote the report.

According to NYU Langone Health’s City Health Dashboard, an online resource that tracks metropolitan health statistics nationwide, the CDC numbers confirm that gun suicides are rising in many cities.

“Cities in states with the strongest gun violence prevention laws have about half the rate of gun suicides as those in states with the weakest laws,” said Dr. Marc N. Gourevitch, the dashboard’s architect. “Research also suggests that cities with fewer gun shops and more parks and walkable neighborhoods have lower rates of gun suicides.”

Others cite the impact of the pandemic on Black and Hispanic communities.

Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine said the first year of COVID-19 health restrictions caused “unwanted side effects” for minorities.

“The pandemic hit hardest the most vulnerable populations, both as a viral infection and mental health,” Dr. Galiatsatos said.

	<p>Some mental health experts noted that Black and Hispanic men often avoid therapy because they see it as a sign of failure.</p> <p>“The perceived stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment can deter individuals in these groups from getting proper care,” said Michael Adamse, a clinical psychologist in Boca Raton, Florida.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Rising costs take bite Thanksgiving dinner
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/rising-food-costs-take-bite-out-of-thanksgiving-di/
GIST	<p>In early November, Hays Culbreth’s mother sent a poll to a few family members. She said she could only afford to make two sides for their group of 15 this Thanksgiving and asked them each to vote for their favorites.</p> <p>Culbreth guesses green beans and macaroni and cheese will make the cut, but his favorite — sweet potato casserole with a brown sugar crust — will not.</p> <p>“Talk about Thanksgiving being ruined,” joked Culbreth, 27, a financial planner from Knoxville, Tennessee.</p> <p>Americans are bracing for a costly Thanksgiving this year, with double-digit percent increases in the price of turkey, potatoes, stuffing, canned pumpkin and other staples. The U.S. government estimates food prices will be up 9.5% to 10.5% this year; historically, they’ve risen only 2% annually.</p> <p>Lower production and higher costs for labor, transportation and items are part of the reason; disease, rough weather and the war in Ukraine are also contributors.</p> <p>“This really isn’t a shortage thing. This is tighter supplies with some pretty good reasons for it,” said David Anderson, a professor and agricultural economist at Texas A&M.</p> <p>Wholesale turkey prices are at record highs after a difficult year for U.S. flocks. A particularly deadly strain of avian flu - first reported in February on an Indiana turkey farm — has wiped out 49 million turkeys and other poultry in 46 states this year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.</p> <p>As a result, U.S. turkey supplies per capita are at their lowest level since 1986, said Mark Jordan, the executive director of Jonesboro, Arkansas-based Leap Market Analytics. Jordan predicts the wholesale price of a frozen, 8-16 pound turkey hen — the type typically purchased for Thanksgiving — will hit \$1.77 per pound in November, up 28% from the same month last year.</p> <p>Still, there will be plenty of whole birds for Thanksgiving tables, Jordan said. Companies have been shifting a higher percentage of birds into the whole turkey market for the last few years to take advantage of the consistent holiday demand.</p> <p>And not every producer was equally affected. Butterball - which supplies around one-third of Thanksgiving turkeys - said avian flu impacted only about 1% of its production because of security measures it put in place after the last big bout of flu in 2015.</p> <p>But it could be harder for shoppers to find turkey breasts or other cuts, Jordan said. And higher ham prices are giving cooks fewer cheap alternatives, he said.</p> <p>Avian flu also pushed egg prices into record territory, Anderson said. In the second week of November, a dozen Grade A eggs were selling for an average of \$2.28, more than double the price from the prior year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p>

Egg prices would have been higher even without the flu, Anderson said, because of the rising cost of the corn and soybean meal used for chicken feed. Ukraine is normally a major exporter of corn, and the loss of that supply has caused global prices to soar.

Add that to rising prices for canned pumpkin — a 30-ounce can is up 17% from last year, according to market researcher Datasemby - and it's clear Thanksgiving dessert will be costlier too. Nestle-owned Libby — which produces 85% of the world's canned pumpkin - said pumpkin harvests were in line with previous years, but it had to compensate for higher labor, transportation, fuel and energy costs.

Plan to fill up on sides? That will also cost you. A 16-ounce box of stuffing costs 14% more than last year, Datasemby said. And a 5-pound bag of Russet potatoes averaged \$3.26 the second week of November, or 45.5% higher than a year ago.

Craig Carlson, the CEO of Chicago-based Carlson Produce Consulting, said frost and a wet spring severely stunted potato growth this year. Growers also raised prices to compensate for the higher cost of seeds, fertilizer, diesel fuel and machinery. Production costs are up as much as 35% for some growers this year, an increase they can't always recoup, Carlson said.

Higher labor and food costs are also making it more expensive to order a prepared meal. Whole Foods is advertising a classic Thanksgiving feast for eight people for \$179.99. That's \$40 more than the advertised price last year.

The good news? Not every item on holiday shopping lists is significantly more expensive. Cranberries had a good harvest and prices were up less than 5% between the end of September and the beginning of November, said Paul Mitchell, an agricultural economist and professor at the University of Wisconsin. Green beans cost just 2 cents more per pound in the second week of November, according to the USDA.

And many grocers are discounting turkeys and other holiday staples in the hope that shoppers will spend more freely on other items. Walmart is promising turkeys for less than \$1 per pound and says ham, potatoes and stuffing will cost the same as they did last year. Kroger and Lidl have also cut prices, so shoppers can spend \$5 or less per person on a meal for 10. Aldi is rolling back prices to 2019 levels.

But Hays Culbreth isn't optimistic about his casserole. He's not much of a chef, so he plans to pick up a couple of pumpkin pies at the grocery on the way to his family's feast.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Who pays for Spokane's homeless crisis?
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-inland-northwest/who-is-paying-for-spokanes-homeless-crisis-local-non-profits-city-leaders-weigh-in/293-d02bd71f-5fdc-40ae-938d-997d6a1f1fcd
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — It has become the symbol of homelessness in Spokane, a sprawling camp of tents and broken down RVs along I-90, known as Camp Hope.</p> <p>What started as a protest last winter took on a life of its own on Department of Transportation land within city limits. Homeless advocates like Jewels Helping Hands say the process of moving people into more permanent housing is a slow one.</p> <p>At its peak, 650-700 people were staying there. It's now closer to 450.</p> <p>Homeless advocates like Jewels Helping Hands say the process of moving people into more permanent housing is a slow one.</p> <p>"There's nowhere for them to go if we don't start housing them," Jewels Founder Julie Garcia said. "The numbers just increase every single year."</p>

But, the city of Spokane hit a setback in early November when the Hope House women's shelter announced it would be forced to close at the end of January because of budget shortfall.

"Unfortunately, the need is great and the funds weren't there," said Rae-Lynn Barden of Volunteers of America, which operates Hope House.

The closure will mean more than 80 women currently staying at the shelter will be forced elsewhere, and up to 35 employees could also be left without a job.

"To put another roadblock for them, it's really devastating," Barden said.

City leaders tell KREM 2 there may still be hope to find enough funding for Hope House, as the 2023 budget is still being finalized.

But homeless advocates across the city believe as Spokane's population continues to boom, and the homeless population increases, leaders need to start focusing more on long-term housing solutions, instead of just shelter beds.

Still, the brand new Trent Avenue shelter is filling an important need for nightly bed space. It's also now being touted as a resource center, a model city leaders are borrowing from Houston, Texas.

"When we went to Houston, that's what they do when they address encampments," said Spokane Mayor Nadine Woodward. "They have navigation centers, and they move people indoors into a navigation center with the expectation that you're going to be assessed there, you're going to be connected to services. And that is where you wait out your housing options. "

But, despite the new shelter, Camp Hope remains.

The mayor says DOT's refusal to clear it has cost Spokane taxpayers more than a half million dollars in garbage cleanup, private security and police overtime.

"We have spent now over \$600,000 on their property and the impact the activity on their property is having on the neighborhood and on businesses."

Earlier this year, Washington state legislators approved \$144 million specifically to tackle homelessness in state-owned rights-of-way, like the one where Camp Hope now sits.

Of the \$25 million allocated to Spokane County, \$14 million went to the Catholic Charities Catalyst transitional housing project at the old Quality Inn on Sunset Hill.

Empire Health received almost \$3.5 million for services at Camp Hope and assessments to get people staying there into permanent housing. That includes \$1.1 million that went to Jewels Helping Hands.

The city of Spokane is also in talk with Commerce to finalize \$1.5 million for 30 beds at the new Trent shelter, although the mayor says at least one request to pay for facility improvements like indoor bathrooms, showers and kitchen space was denied.

The mayor has also faced direct criticism from the Department of Commerce for how Spokane is responding to its growing homeless crisis.

"Commerce hasn't been critical of any other city outside of Spokane, and hasn't blamed any site, any city outside of Spokane for their homeless issue based on an administration or a mayor... I think it's political."

KREM 2 reached out to the Department of Commerce with the Mayor's claim that the city is being treated differently for political reasons.

	<p>DOT sent the following response: <i>"Spokane is not being singled out. We are doing this work in 5 counties and multiple communities and challenges exist everywhere. What is unique about Spokane is that its encampment, on state right of way, is the largest in the state which makes it an exceptional challenge."</i></p> <p>The mayor is also critical of certain organizations receiving a portion of Commerce funding.</p> <p>"I think it's interesting to know that Jewel's Helping Hands is the non-profit that started the protest against the city for not having enough low barrier beds and now they're benefiting from that protest by getting a million dollars from commerce."</p> <p>But Garcia said she is simply helping a homeless population that city leaders ignored for too long. And she says politics between agencies is hindering progress.</p> <p>"If I had a magic wand and could just wave it over everything, I'd take the homeless services out of control of the city and put it in control of a non-profit like the Houston model, where it doesn't change with every political climate."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 WSDOT spends \$millions camp cleanups
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-inland-northwest/wsdot-spending-millions-homeless-camp-cleanup/293-a4afc1dd-e494-4b64-882e-6205d23548d1
GIST	<p>POKANE, Wash. — For nearly one year, the homeless encampment near I-90 in Spokane has grown to become one of the largest in the state. There's been a lot of finger-pointing on who is responsible for clearing the camp which is on WSDOT property.</p> <p>This camp is not the only one along freeways and highways in the state, WSDOT has been cleaning up camps on the 'right of ways' for years, but in recent years it's become very expensive for the agency.</p> <p>In the last three years, WSDOT has expended \$6.3 million towards encampment cleanups on state rights of way. This includes new money allocated by Governor Jay Inslee and the state legislature called the 'Right of Way Safety Initiative.'</p> <p>The state Department of Commerce has \$143 million for a variety of services, housing, and addressing homeless encampments on state roadways/property. Spokane County received just over \$25 million to address issues and encampments like the one along I-90.</p> <p>"(It's) just not a good location for those that are unsheltered to be within our operating right away," said Pasco Bakotich, WSDOT's Director of Maintenance Operations.</p> <p>The program started in the spring and has addressed nine encampments along state highways, including the encampment near I-90 in Spokane.</p> <p>"Our department of transportation has worked as hard as they can, but they didn't have the person power to do it. The legislature has now put in \$300 million to allow them to do it, and that is why this is being successful," said Inslee.</p> <p>Bakotich has been with WSDOT for 36 years, but for the last seven years he's been in maintenance and operations.</p> <p>"But in that seven years, we are seeing more and more individuals finding themselves unsheltered," Bakotich said.</p> <p>Highways and freeways are popular places for the un-housed to set up shelter because they are often hidden behind vegetation or covered from the elements. For WSDOT, this means they are constantly</p>

having to clean-up camps and make the less desirable for people to re-occupy. "To restore them to their original, their original intent, which is the roadside of a traveling highway," Bakotich said.

You can imagine, cleaning up a camp is as expensive, as it is hazardous. In 2014, the agency only spent under \$500,000 statewide, and in 2022, WSDOT spent more than \$2.5 million and that number will likely grow even higher before the end of the year.

WSDOT East region said they spend roughly \$120,000 per year on average, but even that figure will change significantly because the agency is spending \$30,000 per week on security alone at the encampment off of I-90.

Small businesses are also spending thousands of dollars because of issues connected to the I-90 encampment. Liberty Tire and Auto Service, owner Steve Liberty estimates he's lost at least \$16,000.

"We had people you know, living in our building, they broke into our building, tore a door off, then burn a car down, that was in our parking lot," he said.

The encampment is just feet away from his business, over time the camp has inched closer and closer, scaring away customers.

"There's people that don't want to come down into this neighborhood. They don't want to leave their cars. You know what, you can't blame them," Liberty said.

Liberty is hopeful the millions being spent will one day move the camp away from his business, but know just clearing the camp won't solve the root of the crisis.

"Just cleaning up this shelter is going to do nothing, they're just going to move somewhere else. I mean, I don't want this shelter to be just cleaned up. Because all they're gonna do is just moved to another area," Liberty said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 KCSO recruiting staff laid-off by tech firms
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-sherriffs-office-actively-recruiting-staff-laid-off-by-tech-giants
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. - Tens of thousands of people in the tech industry are losing their jobs across the nation, including hundreds of people in the Seattle metro area. Companies including Meta, Amazon, Twitter and Reddit have recently announced layoffs.</p> <p>One law enforcement agency said the loss could be a crucial gain for public safety. The King County Sheriff's Office hopes to capitalize on the layoffs by actively recruiting.</p> <p>"From a mail theft to a murder, we know almost every crime that we investigate now is going to have some digital forensic footprint. Those skills will find a home here at the sheriff's office," said Captain Tim Meyer with the sheriff's office. "The same skills and education it takes to build a good program or good user interface, those [skills] build good criminal cases and help keep communities safe."</p> <p>The Criminal Investigation Division just arrested nine suspects, all accused of using online messaging sites and apps to communicate with children to pay for sex. Meyer said detectives followed the online trends and patterns of the suspects to crack the criminal case. He said this is just one example of the skills the laid off workers could bring to public safety.</p> <p>"Our detectives, they are out there, they're learning which messaging apps, protocols, how do those things happen. We know so much of the activity and sometimes, that activity that impacts our communities most is digital, and it's underground. So, being able to bring those skills in, that background, that knowledge both in software, hardware, but also the logic that goes to support that is important," said Meyer.</p>

	<p>During the most urgent moments in someone's life, staff at the King County Sheriff's Office 911 Center are on the line to assist.</p> <p>"We are the first first-responders here. We're the ones that take the call when people need help," said Kelli West, the center's recruitment supervisor.</p> <p>Through software, hardware, data and phone systems, the center relies heavily on technology to serve those in crisis. However, the center is in a crisis of its own—dealing with a 40% staffing shortage. With the tech industry layoffs, officials at the communications center said they hope those workers will want to transfer their skills to public service.</p> <p>"People that already have a tech background can come in and already be one step ahead. It's going to be very easy to teach the computer and the dispatch system and phone systems to somebody who does have a background in technology," said Lacie Foster, the center's communications training supervisor.</p> <p>The sheriff's office recently attended a career fair in Shoreline recruiting all people who have interest in public safety. The open jobs vary in position and salary. To give an idea about pay, deputies can make approximately between \$73,000 to \$103,000.</p> <p>More information about career opportunities is available on the King County Sheriff's Office website.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Extremes of China's 'zero Covid' policy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/world/asia/china-zero-covid-policy-videos.html
GIST	<p>It has been weeks since Gao Mingjun, a 24-year-old resident of the central Chinese city of Zhengzhou, saw her mother.</p> <p>As coronavirus cases began spreading in Zhengzhou last month, Ms. Gao's mother, who works and lives at the city's Foxconn industrial park — home to the world's biggest iPhone assembly plant — told her daughter that she was barred from leaving the compound. Then, one night, Ms. Gao's mother was ordered into a quarantine center about four miles away. She and dozens of other groggy workers were made to wait outside a workers' dormitory compound around 1 a.m., according to videos she filmed.</p> <p>"She sobbed while we spoke," Ms. Gao said.</p> <p>The videos from Ms. Gao's mother depict the social toll of China's Covid strategy. China continues to use exceptionally stringent measures to try to eliminate infections even as the rest of the world has largely adjusted to living with the virus. Around 340 million people across 37 cities in China — about a quarter of the population — were under some form of lockdown in mid-November, according to an estimate by the investment bank Nomura.</p> <p>Information about the hardship imposed on residents by pandemic measures is limited by intense government censorship. The Times collected and analyzed dozens of videos from cities that have recorded outbreaks this fall. The footage shows that officials have sometimes gone to extremes to enforce lockdowns, such as denying non-Covid patients medical care. Disobedience can lead to public shaming or arrest.</p> <p>The Times verified the exact location of each video. To determine the time period the videos were shot in, the Times traced the earliest emergence of the videos online. In some cases, we were able to confirm by speaking directly with witnesses. In others, we corroborated with news about local Covid prevention and control announcements.</p> <p>The Chinese government says that its strategy is crucial to preventing the mass deaths that other countries, especially those in the West, suffered during the pandemic. Infections and deaths in China have remained relatively low, and while many Chinese decry the harshest restrictions, they say they still support "zero</p>

Covid” in general. Last week, Beijing pledged to fine-tune some Covid restrictions to reduce the disruption to people’s lives, though officials vowed to stick to the strategy.

The Times reached out to China’s National Health Commission for comment as well as the local health authorities or the police in the places where these videos were filmed. The health commission directed The Times to a news conference it held earlier this month, in which officials reaffirmed the importance of “zero Covid.” None of the other authorities responded.

Separation of Children and Parents

The authorities’ central tool for enforcing “zero Covid” is restricting movement. Officials have long targeted not only people who tested positive, but also their neighbors, co-workers or anyone who has visited the same public places as them. Even after officials changed the rules to exclude contacts of contacts, entire housing complexes and districts remain under lockdown around the country. In some cases, they have confined children away from their parents.

The Times found several instances, depicted in videos, where boarding schools kept thousands of young students in lockdown. Boarding students in China normally return home once a week, but these days they can be prevented from doing so for weeks or even months.

On Oct. 27, the authorities in Zunhua, a small city in Hebei Province, [announced](#) that people on the campus of Yizhong Secondary School, a boarding school with thousands of students, were not allowed to leave because of an outbreak.

A video shared on social media shows a group of students, filmed through a window on a door, taking turns reassuring their parents that they are all right. “It’s OK. Everything is fine,” one girl says. The Times verified that it was filmed in a dormitory building at Yizhong by matching the interior details in the video with online photos of the dorms.

Reached by telephone, a teacher at the school, who did not want to be named for fear of losing her job, said that teachers filmed videos of students as an update for parents. It is unclear how long the students were kept in quarantine. Two other teachers declined to answer questions; calls to a number the school posted online in late October for parents seeking information about students’ “conditions living on campus” went unanswered.

At Haiquan School, in Yuncheng, a city in northern Shanxi Province, thousands of boarding students from first to 12th grade were ordered to stay on campus for at least four weeks. On Oct. 30, the school posted videos on its WeChat account showing young children writing notes that say “I love you” or “I miss you,” and classrooms getting on group video calls with parents.

The mother of a fifth grader at the school said in a phone interview that she cried when she video chatted with her son, as they had never been apart for so long. Even sending packages is prohibited, said the mother, who gave only her surname, Chu. Still, she said that her son was safe from infection. “We have to compromise. There’s no other way,” she said.

Enforcement Above All Else

Stopping infections can also take precedence over residents’ basic needs, such as shelter or medical care.

Ms. Gao, the Zhengzhou resident, said her mother was sent to a quarantine center in the middle of the night after one of her co-workers at the Foxconn factory tested positive. But the transfer was chaotic: While waiting for admission to the new location, Ms. Gao’s mother and the other workers spent at least nine hours outdoors, shivering and hungry, the videos showed. Ms. Gao said workers who tested positive put on hazmat suits.

In a statement, Foxconn said it had been fighting a “protracted battle” to protect the health of its more than 200,000 employees in Zhengzhou and that workers’ welfare was a priority. The company did not answer further questions on the details of its quarantine measures or the specifics of Ms. Gao’s mother’s case.

Other videos, widely circulated on social media and analyzed by The Times, also show residents forced to wait outdoors before being sent to a quarantine facility. In one video, posted on Oct. 16, a man in a hazmat suit sits on the street, which was cordoned off by tape. The Times verified the location to be in Zhengzhou.

Another video, which The Times confirmed to be in the Qilihe district of Lanzhou in Gansu Province, shows residents sitting on folding beds in a parking lot. The video emerged in late October, when the district was discovering a handful of asymptomatic cases a day. It is unclear in both videos how long the people stayed outdoors.

In areas with outbreaks, some hospitals have taken in only Covid patients, or required up-to-date negative coronavirus test results for entry. In some cases, this has prevented or delayed people from getting medical help. A video filmed on Oct. 15 in Urumqi, the capital of China's northwestern Xinjiang region, shows a man confronting workers in hazmat suits at a hospital, asking why they will not allow several pregnant women to enter. The guards do not respond.

After the video drew an outcry online, the hospital said in a statement that all beds were full at the time and that one of the women was later admitted.

Rigidly enforced rules can lead to deadly consequences. On Nov. 1, a 3-year-old boy [died of carbon monoxide poisoning](#) after his father's requests for help to an emergency hotline were rebuffed because he lived in a zone with Covid cases. The authorities in Lanzhou promised to "learn from painful lessons" after the death stirred public outrage.

Strict Punishments for Violators

Offenses ranging from leaving quarantine to refusing to wear a mask outdoors can lead to swift punishment — including public shaming or physical violence.

In a video from early October, a police officer from a county in Heilongjiang Province in northeast China publicly reprimands a group of residents with a bullhorn. The authorities had mandated a [nearly weeklong shutdown](#) of businesses and schools after discovering one positive case in a population of more than 350,000.

In another video, several police officers confront an unmasked man at an outdoor produce market in Sichuan Province. After the man turns to address bystanders who are also urging him to put on a mask, an officer suddenly sprays his head with an irritant. Then police officers handcuff him and lead him away.

Some officials have also [beaten residents](#) who complain about being confined or about poor quarantine conditions. In a community in Shandong Province this month, workers in full protective gear punched, dragged and pushed at least two residents, according to [widely shared footage](#) that was met with public anger. The police later said that they had detained seven guards over the incident.

These incidents have stoked dissatisfaction toward the rigid control measures, despite the heavy censorship. And the authorities have at times acknowledged it: Recently, China's National Health Commission criticized some local governments for adopting a "simplified, one-size-fits-all" approach to virus control. Last Friday, Beijing announced that it would [ease some restrictions](#), citing the need for "optimization."

Still, China has affirmed its commitment to the broader goal of eradicating Covid. "Practice has shown that our pandemic control strategy and tactics are completely correct," an official said at a [recent news conference](#).

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HEADLINE	11/16 S-300 missile involved in Poland blast
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/world/europe/poland-missile-s-300.html

GIST	<p>The rocket that caused a deadly explosion on Polish territory was an S-300 air defense missile, officials said on Wednesday — a munition that was built for air defenses but that also has been used by Russia to attack in Ukraine.</p> <p>Both Russia and Ukraine possess the systems, which likely contributed to early confusion over who was responsible for the explosion that killed two people on Tuesday.</p> <p>Polish and American officials on Wednesday downplayed the possibility that the rocket strike was intentional, citing early indications that it had been launched by Ukrainian forces to protect against incoming fire. President Andrzej Duda of Poland said the S-300 appeared to be a Soviet-era munition and “there is no evidence that it was launched by the Russian side.”</p> <p>“It is highly probable that it was fired by Ukrainian antiaircraft defense,” Mr. Duda said.</p> <p>The Polish justice minister, Zbigniew Ziobro, said that the remains of the S-300 were found at the site of Tuesday’s explosion in the village of Przewodów, near the border with Ukraine. He said Polish law enforcement officials and American experts were examining the impact zone.</p> <p>In a post on Twitter, Mr. Ziobro also noted that the S-300 is “used by the Russian and Ukrainian armies” — signaling that determining its origins would take time.</p> <p>Both Russia and Ukraine have depended on the S-300 systems, which are built by Russia, as protection against incoming air assaults during the ongoing war. But military officials and experts have said that Russia has increasingly turned to the S-300, a surface-to-air rocket, for hitting ground targets in Ukraine as its stockpiles of attack missiles dwindle.</p> <p>The S-300 was first used in 1978 and can hit everything from aircraft to drones to ballistic missiles. Over the years, Russia has exported the systems across Asia and Eastern Europe, including to Syria, Iran and to Crimea after Moscow illegally annexed the Ukrainian peninsula in 2014.</p> <p>Older generations of the rocket have a range of roughly 15 miles to 90 miles, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Newer variants can hit targets up to about 120 miles away, according to Janes, a defense intelligence firm.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Ukraine works to keep the lights on
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/17/world/europe/ukraine-electricity-water-infrastructure.html
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Russia is turning winter into a weapon, even as its soldiers flail on the battlefield.</p> <p>In a relentless and intensifying barrage of missiles fired from ships at sea, batteries on land and planes in the sky, Moscow is destroying Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, depriving millions of heat, light and clean water.</p> <p>Keeping the lights on for the majority of the millions of people who live in cities and towns far from the front — and keeping those places functioning through the winter — is now one of the greatest challenges Ukraine faces.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky said late Wednesday night, “If we survive this winter, and we will definitely survive it, we will definitely win this war.”</p> <p>With at least 15 energy facilities hit on Tuesday — some for the fifth or sixth time — the waves of Russian assaults have left about 40 percent of Ukraine’s critical energy infrastructure damaged or destroyed.</p> <p>On Tuesday alone, close to 100 missiles rained down on Ukrainian territory, part of a pattern that many Western officials and legal experts say is a war crime.</p>

The attacks are also damaging water-supply systems that are essential to energy production as well as daily survival.

The latest assault compromised the connection of two nuclear plants to Ukraine's national grid, forcing nuclear operators to dramatically scale back the amount of energy they produce. The national energy utility has now imposed sweeping but controlled blackouts that include every region of the country, leaving millions without power for six to twelve hours a day.

Yurii Levytskiy, the head of the repairs at a critical substation in central Ukraine, offered a glimpse at the magnitude of the challenges facing utility workers — and the nation — during a recent visit to the facility, which he described as the “zero front line for the energy sector.”

“You can see what one missile can do,” said Mr. Levytskiy, pointing to the burned out, hulking remains of the 200-ton transformer that converts high-voltage electricity to a lower wattage that is used in homes and businesses. Charred copper coils and electrical wires spilled out from the multimillion dollar transformer like the innards of a metal beast whose belly had been ripped open.

The missile exploded with such force that the blast shattered windows at a school a mile away, triggered a fire that burned for four days and knocked out power to more than half a million people.

“One missile,” Mr. Levytskiy repeated. Russia has fired more than 4,500 missiles across Ukraine over the course of the war, according to Ukrainian officials, and in the last six weeks, the vast majority have been aimed at civilian infrastructure.

“The situation is serious, the most serious in history,” said Volodymyr Kudrytskyi, the head of Ukrenergo, the national electric utility on Wednesday. “Since the beginning of October, this is already the sixth massive attack on the country's energy infrastructure, this time the largest.”

In an interview before the latest wave of attacks, Mr. Kudrytskyi said the Russian military was being guided by electrical engineers familiar with the country's energy grid, since much of it was built when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. Mr. Levytskiy's substation is a case in point, having been constructed in 1958.

To hit the transformer from hundreds of miles away, the Russians had to know exactly where to strike to do the most damage. Which is why even as Ukrainian air defenses improve — shooting down 75 of the 96 cruise-missiles fired at Ukraine on Tuesday — the Russian missiles that manage to get through continue to degrade the already battered grid.

The precision of the strikes on the infrastructure stands in contrast to the disarray that has characterized much of the Russian military effort. With each loss on the battlefield, Moscow has stepped up its campaign to subjugate Ukraine by targeting civilian infrastructure.

Through a combination of the dedicated efforts of utility workers, shared public sacrifice and sheer tenacity, Ukraine has managed to find a way so far to weather the relentless assaults.

There is no evidence of a mass exodus from the country, although Ukrainian officials have said one goal of the Kremlin is to send another flood of refugees to European countries.

Mr. Levytskiy said that the controlled blackouts — which have grown in scope after each successive attack — have allowed engineers to stabilize the grid. Crucially, despite temporary interruptions, Ukrainian utility workers have also managed to keep the water flowing.

In a country that is 70 percent urban, if the grid fails, the consequences can cascade quickly, especially if water infrastructure is compromised.

“People don’t really fully understand this, but water and energy are incredibly intertwined and interconnected,” said Dr. Peter Gleick, a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and co-founder of the Pacific Institute, a nonprofit research group that addresses global water challenges.

“It takes a tremendous amount of energy to run any modern water system,” he said. “It also takes a lot of water to run our energy systems.”

“As a result, anything that directly affects the energy system directly affects our ability to provide the water that is essential for human survival,” he said.

While people can live in the dark, when the water stops flowing, the fabric of city life can unravel.

Without electricity, taps run dry, water purification becomes unreliable, and wastewater is either not collected or has to be disposed of untreated in rivers and lakes, which can lead to water-related disease outbreaks like cholera and ecological disaster.

Compounding the dangers for Ukraine, Russia is also attacking water infrastructure directly.

Dr. Gleick is currently working with colleagues in Ukraine and Europe on an investigative paper documenting the impact of over 60 explicit attacks on water-related infrastructure in Ukraine in just the first few months of the war.

Since then, Russia has targeted dams and many other critical water-related facilities, according to Ukrainian officials.

Dr. Gleick noted that such attacks are directly banned under the Geneva Convention protocols that prohibit attacks on civilian infrastructure, including “drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.”

Dmytro Novytskyi, the president of the Water and Sewage Utilities Association of Ukraine, said that the attacks on energy infrastructure compounded the staggering challenges water utility workers are already confronting.

“It’s very difficult to get the spare parts now as all the logistic chains are broken,” he said, leading to difficulties at water purification and wastewater treatment facilities.

“Some of the plants stopped working because they are near the front line or in the occupied territories,” he said.

The chemical factory that produces the reagents needed to treat water drawn from the Dnipro and Dniester rivers — the main sources of freshwater in Ukraine — is in a southern city occupied by the Russians.

“Now it’s not working and we have to import those things at a double price,” he said.

The Ukrainian factory that produces chlorine, which is also essential in the process of ensuring clean water, is under constant threat of attack and had to be shut down.

“So we have to import chlorine as well,” he said.

Even as Russia steps up its direct assaults on critical infrastructure, Ukraine is still struggling to repair damage done over the course of nine months of war.

For instance, in Hostomel, where the first battle of the war took place, the Russian retreat came quickly but the damage was lasting.

“We were so happy to kick them out of here, but then we felt the horror of what we saw here,” Leonid Vintsevyeh, the deputy head of the Hostomel military administration. Hundreds of people were killed, thousands of apartments and houses were destroyed and the critical infrastructure was in ruins.

In a remarkable feat of engineering, water and other basic services were restored in a matter of weeks. But eight months later, crews are still working to repair the damage. That is also true in Bucha, Irpin, Sumy, Chernihiv and all the other places Russia suffered early defeats.

In parts of northeastern Ukraine where Russians were driven out in September, the work to restore basic services is just beginning.

In Kherson, which was retaken by Ukrainian forces in recent days, the authorities have to clear mines and make the city and surrounding region safe before they can even begin to properly assess the damage that has left people tens of thousands without heat, water and electricity.

At the power substation in central Ukraine, which cannot be identified because it is critical infrastructure, workers keep a bus ready to rush workers to an off-site bunker every time the air raid alarm wails, knowing they may be a target.

In the last missile attack, workers had 13 minutes to flee from the time the alarm sounded until the first missile hit. All escaped unharmed.

“We were mentally prepared, knowing it would happen sooner or later,” said Mr. Levytskyi, speaking as 330,000 volts of electricity coursed through the power lines above him, audibly buzzing.

He is braced for more attacks.

Putin is a monster, Mr. Levytskyi said, using more colorful language. But every time Russia strikes, he said, Ukraine will rebuild.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Tensions ease over missile strike in Poland
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/world/europe/ukraine-russia-poland-explosion.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — A top NATO official and Poland’s president said on Wednesday that a Ukrainian air-defense missile, not a Russian weapon, had most likely caused a deadly explosion on Polish territory, easing fears that the military alliance would become more deeply embroiled in the war.</p> <p>Both men took pains to say that Ukraine was not to blame, noting that it had been fending off a major Russian aerial assault when the missile struck a Polish grain plant just over the border on Tuesday, killing two people.</p> <p>“Let me be clear: This is not Ukraine’s fault,” said Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO secretary general. “Russia bears ultimate responsibility as it continues its illegal war against Ukraine.”</p> <p>Officials said that what had struck the grain-processing plant was an S-300 missile, a munition that was built for air defenses but that had also been used by Russia to attack Ukraine; Poland’s justice minister said remnants of an S-300 had been found at the site of the explosion. Both Russia and Ukraine possess the systems — the earliest versions were developed in the Soviet Union — and that may have contributed to early confusion over who was responsible for the blast.</p> <p>Poland’s president, Andrzej Duda, called the missile strike an “unfortunate accident” and said: “We have no evidence at the moment that it was a rocket launched by Russian forces. However, there are many indications that it was a missile that was used by Ukraine’s antimissile defense.”</p>

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said his country bore no blame. "I have no doubt that it was not our rocket," he told reporters in Kyiv, according to the [Interfax](#) news agency. Mr. Zelensky has appeared intent on capitalizing on the episode; on Tuesday, alluding to Poland's membership in NATO, he accused Russia of an "attack on collective security."

In the hours after the explosion in the village of Przewodow, about four miles from the Ukrainian border, top Polish officials said they were leaning toward invoking Article 4 of the NATO charter, under which members confer when a nation's territorial integrity or security has been threatened.

But there was little talk of that on Wednesday. After a night of intense discussion, confusion and fear about whether Russia had somehow attacked a NATO ally, the results of the investigation so far seemed to lower the temperature.

After meeting with the alliance's envoys in Brussels, Mr. Stoltenberg stressed that there was no indication of a deliberate attack by Russia or of any Russian plans to attack a NATO member, meaning that the alliance's commitment to collective defense was not at issue. U.S. officials said they had accepted the preliminary conclusions of Poland and NATO.

Neither Russia nor NATO wants to go to war with the other. Even as NATO members have sent military aid to Ukrainian forces, both sides have shown considerable restraint in trying to avoid direct confrontation and keep the war from spilling over into neighboring countries.

Russia has denied responsibility for the explosion, saying that it did not aim any missiles near the border with Poland on Tuesday. On Wednesday, it appeared content with the statements coming out of the West.

"One should never rush to pronounce judgments and statements that can escalate the situation, still more so at such crucial moments," said Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman. "No hasty statements should be made before receiving accurate information."

Mr. Peskov even offered some praise for a Russian adversary.

"In this case, it makes sense to pay attention to the restrained and far more professional response of the American side and the American president," he said. President Biden said early Wednesday after an emergency meeting of allies in Indonesia that preliminary evidence showed the missile had not been fired from Russia.

Still, critical details about what actually transpired have yet to be clarified. There are questions about the trajectory of the missile that hit the grain-processing plant and whether it might have been aiming at — or had hit — a Russian missile in flight.

Mr. Duda said investigators had found no sign that a warhead detonated when the missile came down, suggesting that the blast had involved "explosion of the fuel that remained."

The explosion occurred as Ukrainian military forces were responding to one of the biggest Russian missile barrages since the war began in February. Much of the attack was aimed at crippling Ukraine's energy infrastructure, and on Wednesday it was clear that Moscow had done significant damage.

"Burned residential buildings, destroyed power plants again, hundreds of cities were left without electricity, water and heat," Mr. Zelensky said in a virtual address to the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia on Wednesday. "Internet traffic has fallen by two-thirds — imagine the scale."

The aerial assault left millions of people without power, compromised the connection of two nuclear plants to Ukraine's national grid and prompted the national energy utility to impose sweeping blackouts.

In the western Lviv region, to which millions of people have moved in an effort to escape the fighting, central heating was suspended and there was no hot water in the main city as of Wednesday morning. In

Kryvyi Rih, in central Ukraine, engineers at pumping stations were relying on large generators to keep the water flowing.

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, denounced the barrage of up to 100 missiles fired on Tuesday at civilian infrastructure. “The deliberate targeting of the civilian power grid, causing excessive collateral damage and unnecessary suffering on the civilian population, is a war crime,” he said at a Pentagon news briefing.

General Milley said that Russia, in his view, could not achieve its military goals. The probability of Russia conquering Ukraine, he said, is “close to zero.”

But he said that Ukraine would find it difficult to achieve outright victory, as defined by driving Russia out of all of its territory, including Crimea, in the near future. Russia still has significant combat power in Ukraine, he said, despite its military setbacks.

Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, standing beside General Milley, demurred when asked if he shared that assessment, hinting at continued disagreement within the Biden administration about the course of the war.

“There are countless numbers of people that have been amazed and astonished by what the Ukrainians have accomplished,” said Mr. Austin, a former four-star Army general. “So I won’t presuppose what’s possible or impossible for them.”

In Bali, as the G20 meeting wound up on Wednesday, world leaders struggled to find common ground on the war in Ukraine in their closing statement, making clear the gulf between Western nations and other countries on Russia’s actions.

The summit did not result in the customary joint communiqué, but the officials agreed on a “leaders’ declaration.” The statement said that “most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine,” but that “there were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions.”

Major powers like India and China have been unwilling to join the Western-led sanctions against Moscow, and Indonesia’s president, Joko Widodo, the chairman of this year’s summit, described the paragraph on the war as the most “highly debated.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 China Xi scolds Canada PM over ‘leak’
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/world/asia/xi-trudeau-china-canada.html
GIST	<p>BALI, Indonesia — A brief scolding that the Chinese leader Xi Jinping gave to Canada’s prime minister, Justin Trudeau, at the end of a summit in Indonesia has offered a glimpse into Mr. Xi’s muscular style of personal diplomacy.</p> <p>A short video caught by a news cameraman shows Mr. Xi smiling tightly as he spoke to Mr. Trudeau at a concluding reception for the Group of 20 meeting in Bali on Wednesday.</p> <p>But the words that came out of Mr. Xi’s mouth were chilly.</p> <p>Mr. Xi chided Mr. Trudeau, accusing him of leaking details of a brief conversation they had the previous day.</p> <p>“Everything we discussed has been leaked to the paper. That’s not appropriate,” Mr. Xi says, speaking through a translator. Mr. Trudeau nods curtly. Mr. Xi shakes his head, telling Mr. Trudeau, “that’s not the way the conversation was conducted.”</p>

Mr. Xi goes on to say that “sincerity” is needed for fruitful discussion. “Otherwise, the outcome will be hard to say,” he adds. But before his words can be fully translated, Mr. Trudeau responds.

“In Canada we believe in free and open and frank dialogue,” he says. Mr. Xi looks away, his wan smile has gone, as Mr. Trudeau adds: “We will continue to look to work constructively together, but there will be things we will disagree on.”

Mr. Xi has the final word before the two leaders move on: “Let’s create the conditions first.” After one brisk handshake, the men part ways.

While Mr. Xi has a reputation as a swaggering strongman, his image is carefully managed, and the 40-second conversation offered an unusual peek into how he interacts with other leaders — and can be attentive to perceived slights.

The exchange came at the end of a summit where Mr. Xi has sought to steady China’s relations with the United States, Australia and other Western countries. Canada had not been included in Mr. Xi’s roster of formal meetings, possibly reflecting unhappiness with recent comments by Mr. Trudeau and the Canadian foreign minister, Mélanie Joly.

“Unfortunately we’re seeing that countries, state actors from around the world, whether it’s China or others, are continuing to play aggressive games with our institutions, with our democracies,” [Mr. Trudeau said](#), after news reports that Chinese authorities had meddled in Canadian elections by secretly funding 11 candidates in the 2019 federal election.

In the absence of a formal meeting with Mr. Xi, Mr. Trudeau engaged him in a brief, unscheduled conversation at a reception on Tuesday. Canadian media later reported, [citing the Canadian prime minister’s office](#), that Mr. Trudeau had discussed the war in Ukraine, other international issues, and reports about China’s election interference.

Mr. Xi’s accusation of a leak seemed to be about Canada disclosing details of that unplanned meeting, given that the Chinese government apparently had not prepared its own account.

At a news conference in Bali after the video began to circulate, Mr. Trudeau defended his approach to China.

“Canada needs to be able to engage constructively and directly while at the same time be there to challenge on human rights and values that matter to Canadians,” he said, [according to The Globe and Mail](#).

Mr. Trudeau’s relationship with Mr. Xi has deteriorated significantly since 2015, when Mr. Trudeau first took office vowing to improve Canada’s relationship with China. The prime minister’s trip to Turkey for the Group of 20 leaders’ summit that year was notable for the admiration he and Mr. Xi expressed for each other.

But Canada’s relationship with China fell apart in December 2018, when the Chinese government [jailed Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig](#), two Canadians in China, shortly after Canada had arrested Meng Wanzhou, a Chinese telecommunications executive, in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the request of the United States government.

Both Mr. Trudeau and senior members of his cabinet have increasingly criticized China publicly. The prime minister most recently took China to task following a report that at least 11 candidates in Canada’s last election had received [secret, illegal funding](#) from China.

Mélanie Joly, the foreign minister, recently called China an “increasingly disruptive global power” and warned Canadian companies about potential risks in doing business there.

	<p>Outside of the House of Commons in Ottawa, François Philippe Champagne, the industry minister, who has also recently criticized China, dismissed suggestions that Mr. Trudeau had been indiscreet.</p> <p>“What I’m pleased about is the prime minister standing up for Canada,” he told reporters. “Canadians have all seen the prime minister standing up and saying what is unacceptable.”</p> <p>David Mulroney, Canada’s ambassador to China from 2009 to 2012, said it appeared to him that Mr. Xi planned to dress down Mr. Trudeau within earshot of journalists’ microphones.</p> <p>“It was designed to be a rebuke and to be a public rebuke,” Mr. Mulroney said. “This was very much a lecture from an uncle to a young boy.”</p> <p>For Canadians, Mr. Mulroney said, “the first reaction might be: Well good for Trudeau for standing up.” But he added that he finds it disturbing that Mr. Trudeau was being dressed down just for speaking out against Chinese interference in Canadian elections.</p> <p>The video of Mr. Xi’s encounter with Mr. Trudeau joins a short list of recordings that show the Chinese leader acting off-the-cuff. Another well-known video from 2009, when Mr. Xi was the vice president, showed him on a visit to Mexico, mocking foreign critics of China.</p> <p>“Some foreigners with full bellies and nothing better to do engage in finger-pointing at us,” he said at a reception.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Hate crime conference held in UW Tacoma
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article268552072.html
GIST	<p>Identifying hate crimes can be fraught with confusion, even for those tasked with enforcing and prosecuting the federal and state laws that surround them. But speakers at a conference Tuesday at the University of Washington Tacoma shared a common theme.</p> <p>Report, report and report.</p> <p>“One thing that we know about hate crimes is that they go way, way, way under reported,” said Victoria Cantore with the U.S. Attorney’s Office. “That is the largest reason why we are here today.”</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Nick Brown organized the United Against Hate: Identifying, Reporting and Preventing Hate Crimes conference with a focus on the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community.</p> <p>The conference is a new nationwide initiative from the Department of Justice to combat unlawful hate crimes and incidents. Brown’s western Washington district is among the first 16 districts chosen for the roll out. Eventually, all 94 U.S. Attorneys’ Offices will host their own conferences.</p> <p>The goal is to build better relationships between citizens and law enforcement at every level, Brown said. The result, the Justice Department hopes, will be a better community understanding of how hate crimes play into the overall justice system and more accurate and timely reporting of them.</p> <p>Each district chose its own methods to shape, focus and locate their programs, Brown said. He chose a focus on LGBTQ hate crimes for Tuesday’s conference. Future programs in the series will focus on other groups impacted by hate crimes.</p> <p>“There’s been a real increase in hate based incidences targeting folks across the district in the LGBT community,” Brown said.</p> <p>A panel of speakers represented the Justice Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office.</p>

INCREASING HATE CRIMES

The Pacific Northwest has a disproportionate number of hate crimes across several categories, Brown said.

“We’ve seen a rise in faith-based incidences of attacks on churches or houses of worship,” he said. “We’ve seen certainly a rise of race-based hate crimes across the country, but that is very true in this district.”

Brown said his office has successfully prosecuted several hate crimes, including a man who set fire to a Seattle gay bar as well as the conviction of former Tacoma tattoo artist Jason DeSimas, who assaulted a Lynnwood disc jockey in 2018 because the DJ was Black.

The Justice Department has seen an increasing amount of hate directed to LGBTQ people, particularly at Pride events. A Pride celebration in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, was almost disrupted by white extremists in June.

“I think a lot of people in the general public just don’t get the severity of the problem that we’re facing as a district, but really, as a country,” Brown said.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING

Whether it’s a hate crime, a hate incident or just discrimination, it’s important to report them to law enforcement, speakers said.

“Even if it doesn’t rise to hate crime that we can prosecute, it is still very useful to law enforcement,” said Yessenia Manzo with the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office. “It can help identify patterns in the community. It can help identify individual suspects.”

Whether it’s a hate crime or a lesser hate incident, Ryan Bruett, a special agent with the FBI in Seattle, urged the public to report it to his agency and other law enforcement.

“It’s confusing, even to people that work in this field, about whether something is a hate incident or a hate crime,” he said. “When does it cross that line? And sometimes it’s a gray line. So we don’t expect the good citizenry to make those distinctions.”

Bruett knows victims are often reluctant to report hate incidents to law enforcement. He sometimes learns about hate crimes only from reading about them in the newspaper.

He urged victims of and witnesses to hate crimes to write down details of the incident as soon as possible.

“And exactly what was said and how many times it was said,” Bruett said. “It’s critically important to proving that that’s why this crime occurred — it was bias motivated.”

COMMUNITY TRAUMA

A hate crime might be perpetrated against an individual or small group, but it can reverberate within the community it targets, Brown said.

“It really only takes a few different incidences to terrorize the community,” he said.

“They also matter because people who commit hate crimes often intend to frighten all members of the community who share a targeted trait, and they can come with a chilling message,” said Susan Kas with the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

People who commit hate crimes are frequently repeat offenders, Kas said.

DEFINING HATE

Washington state defines hate crimes as an attempt to injure someone, damage property or threaten a person or group placing them in reasonable fear because of the perpetrator’s perception of the victim’s

race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity or disability.

A hate crime isn't necessarily defined by the victim. Kas told of a recent crime in which a man used his vehicle to threaten two women he perceived as a lesbian couple. They were actually a mother walking with her daughter.

Prosecutors do not need to prove that a defendant hates an entire group of a protected class (race, religion, sexual orientation), Kas said. They only need to prove that the crime was committed because the defendant perceived the victims to be in that class.

A hate incident is not the same as a hate crime, the speakers said.

If a person or group makes anti-LGBTQ comments at a Pride event, for example, it's a hate incident. But if that same group were to then physically attack or threaten the Pride event attendees, the incident would rise to the level of a hate crime.

Although hate crime laws and protections have increased in recent years, the earliest legislation dates to the 1870s. It targeted the KKK following the Civil War.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The Justice Department takes a neutral stance on freedom of expression, Brown said.

Someone might say things another person doesn't want to hear, but they still have the right to say it.

Bruett said his office will frequently get complaints about someone making hateful comments. "These comments are often racist and disgusting, but they're often not illegal," Bruett said. "Under the First Amendment, people have the right to express themselves, even if their message is one of hate."

But a line is crossed when someone expresses the desire to commit violence or urges others to do so.

What a defendant said during the commission of the crime is key to prosecution, Manzo said

"So, if they use a racial or derogatory term, a jury really puts value on whether they said it one time, or whether they said it 10 times," Manzo said.

PREVENTION

A subset of the Justice Department helps mediate conflict and tensions between groups. The Community Relations Services agency builds relationships between groups that are usually at odds with each other, said its chief peacemaker Knight Sor.

"I always advertise my agency as the friendly face of the Department of Justice, because you would want to work with us. We do preventive work," he said.

His group does not advocate, prosecute or investigate, Sor said. "We are peacemakers," he said. "We're neutral and impartial. And our work is always confidential. The work that we do is not only to connect people, but also connect people to resources."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Amazon begins mass corporate layoffs
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Amazon-begins-mass-layoffs-among-its-corporate-17589996.php
GIST	NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon has begun mass layoffs in its corporate ranks, becoming the latest tech company to trim its workforce amid rising fears about the wider economic environment.

On Tuesday, the company notified regional authorities in California that it would lay off about 260 workers at various facilities that employ data scientists, software engineers and other corporate workers. Those job cuts would be effective beginning on Jan. 17.

Amazon would not specify how many more layoffs may be in the works beyond the ones confirmed through California's Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, also known as WARN, which requires companies to provide 60 days' notice if they have 75 or more full-time or part-time workers. Amazon employs more than 1.5 million workers globally, primarily made up of hourly workers.

The online retail giant, like other tech and social media giants, saw sizable profits during the COVID-19 pandemic, as homebound shoppers purchased more items online. But revenue growth slowed as the worst of the pandemic eased and consumers relied less on ecommerce.

The Seattle-based company reported two consecutive losses this year, driven mainly by write-downs of the value of its stock investment in electric vehicle start-up Rivian Automotive. The company returned to profitability during the third quarter, but investors were gloomy about its weaker-than-expected revenue and lackluster projections for the current quarter, which is typically good for retailers due to the holiday shopping season.

In an effort to cut back on costs, Amazon has already been axing some of its projects — including subsidiary fabric.com, Amazon Care, and the cooler-size home delivery robot Scout. It also been scaling back its physical footprint by delaying — or canceling — plans to occupy some new warehouses across the country. And Amazon Chief Financial Officer Brian Olsavsky has said the company was preparing for what could be a slower growth period and would be careful about hiring in the near future.

Mass layoffs are rare at Amazon, but the company has had rounds of job cuts in 2018 and in 2001 during the dot-com crash. On the warehouse side, the ecommerce giant typically trims its workforce through attrition.

Faced with high costs, the company announced earlier this month it would pause hiring among its corporate workforce, adding to the freeze it put a few weeks earlier on its retail division. But the layoffs weren't far off. Employees who work in different units, including voice assistant Alexa and cloud gaming platform Amazon Luna, said they were let go on Tuesday, according to LinkedIn posts. Some of them were based in Seattle, where the company has its headquarters.

"As part of our annual operating planning review process, we always look at each of our businesses and what we believe we should change," Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said in a statement. "As we've gone through this, given the current macro-economic environment (as well as several years of rapid hiring), some teams are making adjustments, which in some cases means certain roles are no longer necessary."

In a note to the devices & services team that Amazon shared on its website, the team's senior vice president David Limp said the company was consolidating some teams and programs. He said those laid off in the process were notified on Tuesday and the company will work with them to "provide support," including assistance in finding new roles. If an employee cannot find a new role within the company, Limp said Amazon will provide a severance payment, external job placement support and what he called transitional benefits.

The retail behemoth follows other tech giants that have cut jobs in the past few weeks — a reversal from earlier this year, when tech workers were in high demand. Facebook parent Meta said last week it would lay off 11,000 people, about 13% of its workforce. And Elon Musk, the new Twitter CEO, slashed the company's workforce in half this month.

Going forward, Wedbush Securities analyst Daniel Ives said he believes Amazon will likely sustain its workforce and investments in profitable areas such as the cloud computing unit AWS, while trimming costs in non-strategic areas like Alexa and other moonshot projects.

	“The clock has struck midnight in terms of hyper-growth for Big Tech,” Ives said. “These companies hired at such an eye popping rate, it was not sustainable. Now there’s some painful steps ahead.”
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HEADLINE	11/16 Lawsuits: Seattle landlords in rent ‘cartel’
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/seattle-landlords-accused-of-conspiring-to-raise-apartment-rents/
GIST	<p>Several of the largest property management companies operating in Seattle conspired to drive up rents and decrease competition, three lawsuits filed this month allege.</p> <p>The cases, filed in federal court in Seattle, focus on the use of RealPage software, which gathers information about rental units and rent prices and uses an algorithm to recommend how much landlords should charge.</p> <p>The complaints claim that by exchanging detailed and “competitively sensitive” information, RealPage and the landlords have illegally created a “cartel” to set prices in violation of antitrust laws.</p> <p>The widespread use of RealPage has increased rents across the country and in Seattle neighborhoods such as downtown, Capitol Hill, the Central District, South Lake Union and Queen Anne, the complaints allege.</p> <p>The lawsuits, filed on behalf of tenants, cited an investigation by the nonprofit news outlet ProPublica that was published in October and detailed the use of RealPage in Seattle and other cities. ProPublica found, for example, that 70% of large apartment buildings in Belltown were run by 10 property management firms that all used the software in at least some of their buildings.</p> <p>Two of the three complaints filed in Seattle focus on traditional market-rate rentals, and the third focuses on student housing. The complaints name RealPage along with nearly two dozen property ownership and management companies based all over the country. The companies include Equity Residential, Avenue5 and Greystar, which claims to be “the nation’s largest apartment operator,” among others.</p> <p>Each case seeks class-action status on behalf of people who have rented from the named companies in recent years.</p> <p>RealPage, Greystar and most of the other named companies did not respond to requests for comment. One student housing company, Campus Advantage, said in a statement it “strongly disagrees with the unsubstantiated allegations in the lawsuit and intends to vigorously defend against the claims.”</p> <p>The cases are part of a new front in antitrust disputes because of the use of an algorithm, said University of Washington law professor Douglas Ross, who specializes in antitrust law.</p> <p>“There’s nothing new or different about saying a group of people got together to raise prices ... The way in which they allegedly have agreed to raise prices is interesting,” Ross said. “That helps set this case apart.”</p> <p>According to ProPublica and the legal complaints, RealPage uses an algorithm to recommend rent prices based on detailed information about rental sizes, prices and vacancies it collects from various large landlords and property management companies. The company promises to help property managers and owners maximize their revenue.</p> <p>Multiple competing rental companies rely on a single entity, RealPage, to set rents “in contrast to a healthy and functioning competitive market,” the complaint alleges.</p> <p>Without the software, landlords independently set their rents in hopes of competing with other rentals and may even offer deals like “first month free,” the complaints allege.</p>

The Washington Multifamily Housing Association, which represents large landlords in the state, declined to comment. Sean Flynn, executive director of the Rental Housing Association, which represents landlords with fewer properties, said he wasn't aware of any of his group's members who use the software. "They don't even try to sell [RealPage] to our people," Flynn said.

Vacancy rates and other details about rental properties have long been "closely held secrets in the industry because people are competing," Flynn said. His group has avoided collecting rent data from its members for fear of appearing to fix prices, he said.

RealPage and large landlords are able to maintain a "cartel" because tenants face high costs to switch apartments and because it's difficult and expensive for competing landlords to quickly match the market share of those companies working with RealPage, [the complaints](#) allege.

In Seattle, renters will find "few realistic and low-cost alternatives" to renting from a company using RealPage, [one of the filings](#) noted.

Steve Berman, the attorney bringing two of the cases, said his firm has heard from "hundreds" of tenants living in buildings managed by the named companies since filing the first case.

"We've just been inundated with people telling us their stories, their belief the rent is too high and the hardship that has caused," Berman said.

Proving antitrust claims can be difficult, Ross said.

Plaintiffs challenging the use of the algorithm could win by showing that competing landlords together entered into a price-fixing agreement. In the absence of an explicit agreement, though, they would need to show that each landlord knew others were using the program "and was willing to use RealPage only because so many of its competitors were using RealPage," leading to higher rents, Ross said.

Proving that Seattle rents climbed because of the use of RealPage will be a challenge, too, given other factors such as Seattle's huge population growth and slim supply of housing over the last decade. "That would be a real battle," Ross said.

The outcome of the cases could be months away. Private antitrust lawsuits typically settle rather than go to trial, Ross said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Housing discrimination is worse today?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/black-homeownership-washington-state-racism/281-b12a3eb0-d907-4a51-b686-6ac3f462ab86
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The gap in the homeownership rate between Black and white families in the U.S. is bigger today than when it was legal to refuse to sell someone a home because of the color of their skin, according to data from the Urban Institute.</p> <p>The percentage of Black people who own homes in Washington state is 31.1%, well below the national average of 42.6% and less than half of the white homeownership rate in Washington state, which sits at 64%.</p> <p>That means fewer Black families own homes compared to white families in Washington and nationwide.</p> <p>What are the reasons behind these disparities? The KING 5 Facing Race team pulled back the layers of inequity and bias in the real estate industry that mean fewer Black families are able to buy and keep their homes.</p>

Keeping a home

Owning a home can be hard. For Keisha Credit keeping her home was even harder.

“When I got the house, it was like, ‘Keisha, don't you lose that house,’” said Credit, an entrepreneur and small business coach based in Seattle’s Central District.

Two years ago, Credit’s grandfather passed away and left her his Central District home. It has been in their family for 54 years.

Credit was fortunate to get the home as an inheritance. According to a recent survey conducted by the Federal Reserve, Black families are less likely to receive an inheritance than white families are, which can help prospective homeowners cover a down payment. Only 26% of Black families received or expected to receive an inheritance, compared to 47% of white families.

The day after her grandfather’s funeral, Credit said she received the first of many letters that were persistent and predatory.

“The next day, up my stairs comes a letter saying, ‘Hey, you know, we heard Dan had passed away. We want to buy your house. We can give you \$800,000,’” said Credit.

Eight hundred thousand dollars is a low offer in a neighborhood where some homes are selling for up to \$3 million. Credit said she never entertained the idea of selling the home because it was her grandfather’s wish for her to keep it.

“[My grandfather] would always be like, ‘At least I own my house,’” Credit said. “It was everything. Like it was his source of comfort. It was his source of peace and stability.”

Seattle story goes viral

As Credit began the massive task of renovating the home, which hadn’t really been updated since it was built in the 1960s, she decided to document her progress on [TikTok](#). Along the way, she shared tidbits about the extremely low and persistent offers she was receiving on the house. Quickly her posts garnered millions of views.

In [one of her TikTok videos](#) that has been viewed over 4 million times, she explains, “[People] feel like, ‘Oh, these Black families are going to lose their house as soon as someone passes away, so let me jump in and stake my claim,’ not realizing that some of us know what the f*** is going on and we are not selling.”

Now, Credit is teaching others to spot the scams and tricks used to push people of color into selling their homes.

“There are all these tactics they use to try to scare you to make you feel like you can’t stay on your land,” she said.

But those lowball offers were just the start.

Fake collection notices

Soon Credit’s mailbox was filled with legitimate-looking collection notices claiming she was behind on her property taxes or owed money to the IRS.

“When I started to get letters that would say, ‘Hey, you know, you're getting behind on your taxes,’ I looked into it, because I'm like, ‘Whoa, how did that happen? In this transfer of property was there something I missed?’” said Credit. “And then that's when I understood like, wait a minute. This is not real. Their goal is to either get you into a terrible loan to get you to sign over your house, do some type of reverse mortgage.”

Dr. Angelique Davis, a professor of political science and African American studies at Seattle University, said this practice was "basically fraud."

"I mean, this is completely misleading information," Davis said. "And they are, in many ways, being set up."

She said what happened to Credit may not be illegal, but it is unethical.

"These are very predatory practices that are happening. And we've seen the effects of that with gentrification in the Central District in particular," said Davis.

Credit knows what losing the home would cost her in the long run.

"The generational equity and wealth that has been gained, it will take you twice as long to then get back to where you were as a family and continue to grow. So to think that we can sell now, get something, go somewhere else and continue to multiply that...the opportunities are very low," she said.

Losing a home

Once that wealth is washed away it's not easy to start over. Just ask Kateesha Atterberry.

KING 5 Reporter PJ Randhawa met with Atterberry outside the Rainier Beach home she grew up in.

"My room was up top there in the attic. There were a lot of Blacks in this neighborhood. It just brings back a lot of memories," said Atterberry.

The home had been in her family since the 1960s. However, when Atterberry was a freshman in high school, her parents made a financial decision that would change her life.

"[They got] a bad loan that they were not educated and prepared for when it arrived. So, unfortunately, the house went into foreclosure," said Atterberry.

The impact was devastating. Atterberry was forced to transfer high schools several times as a result and no longer had a stable home.

"I had plans to go to the UW Foster School of Business, join the gymnastics team and then go to the Olympics. That was my plan and then with the loss of the home, that threw me off that course," said Atterberry. "I had to stay at my cousin's house, couch surfing, or with multiple people in one apartment or room. And that lasted for many years."

'Layers of racism'

Data from real estate experts show when it comes to buying a home, the cards are stacked against Black families from the get-go.

According to [state data](#), It can take the average Black household nearly 30 years to save for a down payment. Compared to white borrowers, African Americans are [two-and-a-half times more likely to be rejected for a loan](#).

That's partly because Black families are more likely to also have student loan debt and higher debt-to-income ratios that banks see as risky for approving loans. Even when Black families are able to buy a home, the roadblocks and disparities pile up.

According to [Harvard University](#), Black families pay higher interest rates than white homeowners even when they're considered to be "high income," which in this case means earning between \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year.

Black homes are also appraised to have less value.

Several recent studies show homes in majority Black neighborhoods are often appraised for up to 23% less than comparable homes in white neighborhoods.

"It's just like, these double, triple layers of racism that are happening. So not only are you paying more for a home that's being valued as less, right, and then you're not able to use that to help leverage to build more wealth for you and your family," said Davis.

"There's so many barriers. When you hear people say, 'Lift yourself up by your bootstraps,' what they're not taking into account is the historic implications of being a person of color in this country," said Atterberry.

Fifteen years after losing her childhood home, Atterberry still does not own her own home. She worries her children will not have the same idyllic childhood she did in this quiet Rainer Beach alcove.

"Almost two decades and still have not been able to regain this," she said.

Atterberry is the founder and managing director of [Urban Black](#), a community-focused company that develops innovative, sustainable and culturally specific land projects that transform neighborhoods and promote economic value within diverse communities.

"I feel like it's helping the next generation become informed about homeownership, wealth, economics," said Atterberry.

Back in the Central District, Credit's TikTok warnings about gentrification, fake property tax bills and Black homeownership have been picked up by national media outlets, including the Dr. Phil Show.

"Every day I'm like, you're not going to let this system win. Because this system is not for you. There was no system built for you. There was no safety net for you. There was nothing in all of these systems, other than your grandpa, that was built for you," she said.

Credit is hoping to turn the tide by helping Black families navigate the challenges of buying a home, while she fights to keep hers.

"It's not just about your home as a place to stay," Credit said. "It is a generational opportunity. So you better fight for it because it matters."

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HEADLINE	11/16 King Co. urges preparations for burn areas
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/disaster/king-county-landslide-flash-flood-bolt-creek-fire/281-8e5ad4ac-2dca-4004-ae4b-46dbc565cdba
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Communities in the Cascade foothills where the Bolt Creek Fire broke out this summer need to start preparing for the possibility of landslides and flash floods, King County Executive Dow Constantine urged Wednesday.</p> <p>Constantine said King County is working with emergency management officials and the National Weather Service to make sure people are ready, including by going door-to-door.</p> <p>The risk is highest in the burn scar from the fire, where the fire-damaged ground is weaker and more susceptible to landslides and flash flooding with even a small amount of rain.</p> <p>"This is our new reality," said Constantine. "These risks and hazards will not disappear overnight. I'm no expert on this, but I know that it is going to take time for the hillsides to become revegetated for them to be able to hold water again during storm events."</p>

Wolcott said the United States Geological Survey examined the burn scar and determined as little as a quarter of an inch of rain in 15 minutes, or half an inch an hour, could produce flash flooding and landslides.

"We've never seen a burn this severe at this scale that has impacted our region," said Warning Coordination Meteorologist Reid Wolcott with National Weather Service in Seattle. "This is happening in a location where we have homes and infrastructure that are at risk of being demolished."

With rain and snow returning to the region for the winter, King County emergency officials are urging residents along US 2 to be prepared in case they become isolated and to make emergency kits of essential supplies.

"With the landslides and these other hazards that could happen with almost no or very little warning, residents of the area and all people within King County should have an emergency plan," said King County Emergency Management Director Brendan McCluskey.

While western Washington has felt impacts of landslides, but due to the severity of the burn scar, there is a possibility of seeing debris flows. Those are a type of landslide that consist of fallen trees, mud and boulders that travel like rivers down slopes.

The U.S. Geological Survey says that as little as a quarter inch of rain falling in 15 minutes could potentially lead to flash floods and debris flows.

According to the King County website, your [emergency kit](#) should include (at a minimum) the following items:

- **Water**
 - 1 gallon per person per day (for drinking, washing, cooking)
- **Food**
 - Non-perishable, ready to eat food
 - Select items you like to eat
 - Monitor expiration dates and replace as needed
- **First Aid supplies**
 - Bandages, antiseptic wipes, gauze pads, scissors, tweezers, and pain-relief medication
 - Prescriptions and personal medical equipment
- **Electronics**
 - Light sources that are hand-cranked or battery powered
 - Portable radio and extra batteries (a great way to stay informed)
 - Alternate means to charge your phone or computer
- **Clothing**
 - At least one extra pair of warm clothing
 - Rainproof outer clothing and boots to keep you dry
 - Comfortable, sturdy shoes in case you need to walk long distances

King County emergency officials also urged residents to sign up for [ALERT King County](#), a public information and notification service.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Black Seattle family 'whitewashes' home
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/low-home-appraisal-black-family-seattle/281-6fa15484-d9a0-434f-a3e3-c368d6324755
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — In Seattle and around the country, the color of someone's skin can impact the value of their home.</p> <p>In the Clark home, kitchen conversations sizzle in life lessons.</p>

“Generational wealth is money, houses, or things you pass down,” said Jaxton Clark, 10, while helping his father prepare breakfast in their Columbia City home.

It’s been four years since the Clarks bought their house.

“The homes are selling for over a million dollars here,” said Joe Clark. “We bought this house kind of under -- it was under duress.”

The Clarks immediately began renovating to make space for their two children.

“We put in a new kitchen, new bathroom, an extra bathroom. And we have plans to expand the second floor,” said Clark.

But while the Clarks were building up, they were surprised to learn the value of their home had gone down according to a home appraiser, sent by their mortgage company in April.

The Clarks requested the appraisal as they considered financing options for their renovations.

“[The appraisal] came in very low, which was really unexpected. [My agent] asked me, ‘How was the appraisal?’ I said, ‘It came in really low.’ ‘Oh, because it was \$800,000-\$900,000?’ and I’m like, ‘No, no, it was in the sixes,’” said Clark.

The three-bedroom home was valued at \$670,000 dollars to be exact.

“It was quite amazing to have an appraisal that low in this market,” said Clark.

Earlier this year, Seattle real estate prices hit record highs, so Clark’s appraisal seemed questionably low. According to Zillow data, the typical home value in the Columbia City neighborhood this spring was over \$900,000.

“I just want to make sure that we get the fair market value for the home,” said Clark.

The 'whitewashing' experiment

After the low appraisal, Clark decided to stage an experiment. He scheduled a second appraisal and asked his white neighbor Marta Eull to be his stand-in.

“The objective was to see if you had a person that was not someone of color in the house...if that would change the amount that he got for the appraisal to see if there was some kind of bias there,” said Eull.

Clark began the process of what he calls "whitewashing" his home by taking down his family photos and African art.

“Here’s a picture of my grandparents. Here’s a picture of my daughter at Christmas time. I took them down for the second appraisal,” he said.

And this time when the new appraiser came weeks later, they saw Eull’s white face instead of Clark's.

The second appraisal came back over \$300,000 higher than the first appraisal. The second appraiser valued the home at \$929,000.

“We're talking a three-week period, and nothing else changed in the house outside of me,” said Clark.

“I was really happy that it came back and it was better for Joe, but I was mad that they had to go through that to get an appraisal that the rest of the neighborhood was at,” said Eull.

“It is a part of our systematic racism that is here in America but we need to do something about it. It’s taking away our generational wealth,” said Clark.

The differences between appraisals

KING 5 took a closer look at the differences between the two appraisals to figure out how the valuations could be so far apart.

Appraisals are largely based on what similar homes in the area have sold for. However, there aren’t clear guidelines on what criteria those comparable homes need to fit; it’s up to each individual appraiser to choose, which can be a problem.

“There’s no set standard of what that is. So where [appraisers] draw those lines differ,” said Dr. Junia Howell, an urban sociologist and race scholar who studies home appraisal disparities across the country.

In Clark’s first, low appraisal from April, to assess the value of the home, the appraiser chose “comparable” or similar homes that sold up to 2 miles away for \$600,000 over the previous six months.

“They were like in Hillman City, somewhere in Rainier Beach as well. One was over by Genesee Park, which are all not part of this neighborhood of Columbia City,” said Clark.

This first appraisal also appeared to contain several errors, according to Clark. It did not take into account any of the renovations the Clarks had completed. Clark says the appraisal lasted less than 30 minutes, and the appraiser did not ask him many questions about the home or neighborhood.

Clark’s second appraisal, which was \$300,000 higher than the first, in contrast, took much longer – roughly an hour and a half. The second appraiser also took into account that some homes nearby had sold for more than \$1 million, including the home right across the street from Clark’s. Using that critical context to compare, the home was valued at \$929,000.

“Am I surprised by this case? Well, I’ve seen a lot of them. I’ve seen a lot around the country. And I can show systematically that they’re not an anomaly,” said Howell. “Homes in communities of color are worth 70% less, on average, when holding everything else constant as homes in white neighborhoods. It’s really insane.”

That disparity adds up. A recent study by the Brookings Institute found appraisal differences amounted to roughly \$48,000 per home or \$156 billion cumulatively in majority Black neighborhoods.

“It is something that is going to affect [my children],” Clark said. “Because our Black and brown families homes are often devalued. They’re often taken away from us.”

Bias rooted in the appraisal industry

The Clarks are navigating a system that is deeply rooted in documented racist rhetoric going back nearly 100 years. Howell explained how racist ideology from the 1920s made it into the then-budding appraisal industry.

“In the 1920s, the kind of new, at the time, Real Estate Association group started working with professors to systematize, and basically make their profession look more professional. But those that they were calling on were people who were trained by, and in other writings, pulled on social Darwinism and eugenics ideas that white communities were superior and making sure it continued to be the case by keeping out people who they thought didn’t belong in those white communities,” said Howell.

Appraisal manuals from the 1930s to the 1970s perpetuated the belief that race was linked to value. One appraisal manual from 1946 ranked, in their words, “Negros and Mexicans” at the bottom of a list of who brings value to a neighborhood. At the top? White Europeans.

“That's racist, and historically, deeply problematic. And contemporarily, [it is] affecting real people's lives in ways that we can collectively push against and say we want and we demand better,” said Howell.

Such discrimination became illegal under the Fair Housing Act of 1968. But while the manuals may have changed, the diversity of the people determining home values hasn't. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 96.5% of appraisers are white and 70% of them are men.

“There are many initiatives to change the requirements to be a certified appraiser. There are many initiatives to try to recruit and train other people. So this is something that is being worked on,” said Howell.

Home value linked to generational wealth

According to the Brookings Institute, the net worth of a typical white family is nearly 10 times greater than that of a Black family. The racial gap exists in every income group except the lowest economic levels, where the median net worth is zero for everyone.

“These large disparities are creating generational wealth gaps [like] what kind of capital people have to take out of their houses to send their kids to school, or to kind of weather situations of health disaster or health crises in their families,” Howell said. “There's so many things that home value matters for in our country because of how we've centralized it. And it has all these detrimental effects when you don't have that.”

“We're fighting for the next generation,” said Clark. “I'm doing all this for my kids so that they can have a better life.”

For Clark that means not worrying if the color of his skin will impact the value of what he can pass down to his kids.

“He wants me to be successful in life... not have to struggle, struggle in life or minimize those struggles... as a Black man in America,” said Jaxton.

“I'm always surprised by the things he knows,” said Clark. “I'm really proud of him. I'm impressed that he's paying attention.”

Several states, as well as Congress, have recently begun to consider legislation to address appraisal disparities. However, not yet in Washington.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Local ski resorts to reopen this week
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/mt-baker-crystal-mountain-ski-resorts-reopen-this-week/KPQ7XNXBMNHCTHAAHWEZK26DHE/
GIST	<p>With snow coming down in the Cascade Mountains, it's almost time to hit the slopes again this year.</p> <p>Crystal Mountain and Mt. Baker ski areas have confirmed that they will be reopening this week.</p> <p>The first to open will be Mt. Baker on Thursday, Nov. 17 for season ticket holders and Friday, Nov. 18 for the rest of the public. For more information on Mt. Baker Ski Area's opening, click here.</p> <p>Crystal Mountain chairlifts will similarly start delivering skiers and riders at 9 a.m. Friday, Nov. 18, the earliest the mountain has been open since 2017.</p> <p>The first weekend of operations will be for season ticket holders exclusively, but by Monday, the mountain will be open to the general public. For more details on Crystal Mountain Resort's season opening, click here.</p>

	<p>Open terrain is expected to be limited at both ski areas, with early-season conditions prevalent and no natural snow expected until Sunday, Nov 20.</p> <p>The Summit at Snoqualmie and Stevens Pass are expected to reopen in early December, with the former opening for the season Dec. 14 and the latter opening Dec. 2.</p> <p>“While fresh snow provided a terrific start to November, we need a bit more to put the fleet back out on the hill,” Stevens Pass General Manager Ellen Galbraith wrote in an update on the opening. “We’re still targeting Dec. 2 as our opening date, but we’re constantly evaluating conditions and forecasts and will open when Mother Nature allows.”</p> <p>Part of the reason for the earlier-than-normal opening dates is the high snowpack that Washington has gotten this November, with Natural Resources Conservation Service’s SNOTEL data showing that snowpack is 211-441% higher than average, depending on the area. This is likely due to the third La Niña winter in a row, which leads to above-average precipitation in Washington and the mountains generally see more snow than usual.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Mexico south immigration controls tighten
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-steps-immigration-controls-south-93436804
GIST	<p>TAPACHULA, Mexico -- Mexican security and immigration authorities have stepped up patrols, highway checkpoints and raids in southern Mexico since the United States started expelling Venezuelan migrants last month.</p> <p>The Mexican government has not said whether its enforcement actions near its border with Guatemala are related to the U.S. policy change, which effectively shuts the door to Venezuelans trying to enter the U.S. through Mexico, but the efforts have put migrants in this southern city on edge.</p> <p>Authorities have also been more active in breaking up small migrant caravans that try to advance north from Tapachula.</p> <p>For months, the government seemed to encourage small groups of migrants to leave Tapachula, to relieve the building pressure and frustration there. It established an immigration center that issues temporary documents 180 miles to the northwest in San Pedro Tapanatepec.</p> <p>But a small caravan that was scheduled to leave Monday had only 100 migrants. And authorities broke up two small caravans that had left the previous week after letting them walk for about 90 miles.</p> <p>Orley Castillo of Honduras has been living in Tapachula's central park for a week with his 15-year-old son. In that time, he has seen National Guard and immigration agents pursuing migrants, including on one occasion when he and his son were detained until showing papers proving they had applied for asylum.</p> <p>“Two consecutive days the Guard and immigration have come to run off the people because a caravan was supposedly going to form,” he said sitting in the park Wednesday.</p> <p>Venezuelan Doris Medina and Ecuadoran Omar Montalván tried to ride public transportation vans town by town north from Tapachula, but within half an hour Montalván was detained at one of the highway checkpoints and taken to an immigration detention center. They had gotten around previous checkpoints by getting out of the vans and walking around the authorities.</p> <p>Still, many are finding a way to move north. Thousands of migrants await temporary documents at the immigration center housed in large tents in San Pedro Tapanatepec.</p> <p>Savi Arvey, senior policy adviser for the Migrant Rights and Justice Program at the Women’s Refugee Commission, visited the camp last week. She said there were an estimated 12,000 to 17,000 migrants</p>

waiting there for temporary immigration documents that limited migrants to moving around the state of Oaxaca.

On Wednesday, Humberto Parrazales, the mayor of San Pedro Tapanatepec, said he was going to ask federal officials to move the immigration camp out of his town. In a video message posted to his Facebook account, he said it had been challenging to provide basic services for so many people and the town had cooperated for as long as it could.

The Mexican agency that handles asylum applications does not have a presence at the camp, limiting migrants' options, she said. Nongovernmental organizations, including her own, do not have access to government's tents unlike at migrant camps in northern border cities.

Migrants sleep along the town's main street, rent floor place from homeowners or stay inside the government's tents, though immigration officials there denied that, Arvey said.

Some migrants try to use the documents to advance farther north, but risk having them torn up by authorities who then ship the migrants back south.

Arvey said immigration officials told her they were processing approximately 1,500 to 2,000 such documents per day, but migrants complained of lengthening waits. "We did speak to a number of people who had been there for a week to even a month," she said.

Mexico's National Immigration Institute did not respond to questions about activities at the camp.

Many of those waiting were Venezuelan migrants who remained confused about the Biden administration policy instituted last month that effectively closed the border to them. Venezuelans can apply for temporary entry to the United States from abroad if they meet a number of requisites, including having a U.S. sponsor.

"There needs to be a much greater humanitarian presence given how long, especially this has persisted," Arvey said. "It seems like people are spending longer and longer there."

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HEADLINE	11/17 'Barbed wire curtain' rises in Europe
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/barbed-wire-curtain-rises-europe-amid-war-ukraine-93461796
GIST	<p>WARSAW, Poland -- The long border between Finland and Russia runs through thick forests and is marked only by wooden posts with low fences meant to stop stray cattle. Soon, a stronger, higher fence will be erected on parts of the frontier.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Polish soldiers began laying coils of razor wire on the border with Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave wedged between Poland and Lithuania. Cameras and an electronic monitoring system also will be installed on the area that once was guarded only by occasional patrols of border guards.</p> <p>The fall of the Berlin Wall more than 30 years ago symbolized hope for cooperation with Moscow. Now, Russia's war in Ukraine has ushered in a new era of confrontation in Europe — and the rise of new barriers of steel, concrete and barbed wire. These, however, are being built by the West.</p> <p>"The Iron Curtain is gone, but the 'barbed wire curtain' is now unfortunately becoming the reality for much of Europe," said Klaus Dodds, a professor of geopolitics at Royal Holloway, University of London. "The optimism that we had in Europe after 1989 is very much now gone."</p> <p>Fear and division have replaced the euphoria when Germans danced atop the Berlin Wall and broke off chunks of the barrier erected in 1961 by Communist leaders. It stretched for 155 kilometers (nearly 100 miles), encircling West Berlin until 1989, when East German authorities opened crossings following mass protests. Within a year, East and West Germany were reunited.</p>

Some countries in the European Union began building border fences as a response to more than 1 million refugees and other migrants entering southern Europe from the Middle East and Africa in 2015 alone. In 2015 and 2016, Russia ushered thousands of asylum-seekers, also mostly from the Middle East, to border checkpoints in northern Finland.

When relations with Belarus deteriorated after its authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko was declared the winner of an election widely seen as fraudulent, the government in Minsk sent thousands of migrants across the EU's frontiers in what Dodds called "hybrid warfare." In response, Poland and Lithuania erected walls along their borders with Belarus.

Michal Baranowski, head of the Warsaw office of the German Marshall Fund think tank, said most security analysts believe Belarus coordinated its effort with Moscow, "in effect destabilizing our borders ahead of war in Ukraine."

Fearing another migration crisis as a response to sanctions against Moscow because of the nearly nine-month war in Ukraine, European leaders have begun hardening their borders.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin announced plans to fortify parts of her country's 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border — the longest with any EU member. Moscow has threatened "serious military-political consequences" against Finland and Sweden for seeking to join NATO, and Marin said the fortifications would help defend the nation against the "hybrid threat" of possible large-scale and irregular migration orchestrated by the Kremlin.

The new barriers offer little protection from missiles or tanks. Governments instead expect the walls, fences and electronic surveillance to provide better control of their borders and to stop large migrant surges.

Dodds says Russia has been weaponizing migration for several years as it engages in a "civilization conflict with its European neighbors."

Russia bombed and harassed Syria's population in 2015 "in a deliberate attempt to create a humanitarian crisis," he said.

"I think one of the difficulties we sometimes have outside of Russia is in actually appreciating quite how cynical, quite how calculating, quite how deliberate some of this work is," said Dodds, author of "The New Border Wars: The Conflicts that Will Define Our Future."

Russia's use of migrants to create social discord in places like Poland, Lithuania and Latvia has led to those governments not offering them the chance to apply for asylum and refusing them entry in many cases — as has happened in other European countries like Greece and Hungary.

Those pushed back to Belarus have been subjected to abuse by Belarusian guards who initially helped them cross the borders, according to human rights groups.

Human rights activists in Poland have protested the the 5½-meter (18-foot) steel wall erected along 186 kilometers (115 miles) of its border with Belarus, arguing that it keeps out the weakest people but not the most determined.

Anna Alboth of the Minority Rights Group has spent months at that border and said she has seen people use ladders to scale the fence or tunnel under it.

Since the wall was finished last summer, about 1,800 migrants who made it inside Poland and found themselves in forests desperate for food, water or medicine have called Grupa Granica, an umbrella organization Alboth co-founded.

	<p>"It's very difficult territory, the east of Poland," she said. "There are a lot of animals. I had a situation where I went to one group and I stepped on people who were half-conscious. I am sure there were many people like this."</p> <p>She said she recently encountered groups of women from Sudan who appeared to be human trafficking victims, as well as medical students from Africa who were in their fifth year of studies in Russia.</p> <p>"They said 'Russia is falling apart and we want to live in a normal country,'" Alboth said.</p> <p>A Polish government security official, Stanislaw Zaryn, acknowledged the border wall doesn't stop everyone seeking to cross illegally, but added: "It does allow our forces to act rapidly and more efficiently, without the need to deploy as much manpower as before."</p> <p>Both that wall and the fence with Kaliningrad "convey a strong message to Minsk and Moscow that Poland takes the security and integrity of its borders extremely seriously," Zaryn said. "I believe that Belarus and Russia will think twice before pursuing again the weaponization of migration."</p> <p>Dodds said he understands the impulse to build walls but warns that they rarely work as intended, often pushing migrants onto more hazardous journeys.</p> <p>While militarized borders might be popular, they also tend to dehumanize desperate migrants, who often are willing to risk the danger of border crossings for a better life.</p> <p>Building such walls and fences "sucks empathy and compassion from our societies," Dodds said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Iraq probe: 2nd fire at Baghdad airport
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fire-breaks-baghdad-airport-prompting-probe-93462460
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- A fire broke out in Baghdad's international airport Thursday for a second time in 48 hours, prompting Iraqi authorities to open an investigation.</p> <p>The fire broke out at dawn on the ground floor of the airport's VIP hall and caused some material damage but no human losses, according to an Iraqi military statement. The fire was put out by 16 civil defense brigades, according to the statement. Flights continued as scheduled.</p> <p>The civil defense requested that an investigation be launched to determine the cause of the fire. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani visited the area. Al-Sudani assumed the premiership on Oct. 28.</p> <p>An airport official said the fire had started in a section of the VIP hall reserved for the premier and spread to the hall from there. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media about the ongoing investigation.</p> <p>Thursday's fire was the second to break out in the span of a week at the airport. On Tuesday, a fire broke out in its departure hall that temporarily suspended flights.</p> <p>Since al-Sudani assumed power, an American living in Baghdad was shot and killed and Iran has launched missile attacks into the country's north targeting Kurdish opposition groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/17 Russia launches new Ukraine barrage
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-fires-airstrikes-announces-grain-deal-93463282
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Russian airstrikes inflicted more damage on Ukraine on Thursday, with the latest barrage smashing into energy infrastructure, apartment buildings and an industrial site.</p>

At least four people were killed and more than a dozen others wounded in drone and missile strikes around the country, authorities said.

Separately, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres announced an extension of a four-month-old deal to ensure the safe delivery of export of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizers from Ukraine through the Black Sea just days before it was set to expire.

Guterres said in a statement the United Nations is also “fully committed” to removing obstacles that have impeded the export of food and fertilizer from Russia, which is one of two agreements struck between the two countries and Turkey in July. The deals signed in Istanbul are aimed to help bring down prices of food and fertilizer and avoid a global food crisis.

There was no immediate confirmation of the agreement from Russia.

Air raid sirens sounded all across Ukraine early Thursday amid fears that Moscow was unleashing its latest large-scale missile attack as the war approaches its nine-month milestone.

In Kyiv, the city’s military administration said air defenses shot down at least two cruise missiles and five Iranian-made exploding drones.

With the Kremlin’s forces on the ground being pushed back, Russia has increasingly resorted in recent weeks to aerial onslaughts aimed at energy infrastructure and other civilian targets in parts of Ukraine it doesn’t hold.

Ukrainian air defenses this week appear to have had far higher rates of successful shoot-downs than during previous barrages last month, analysts say. The improvement results in part from Western-supplied air defense systems.

But some missiles and drones still get through.

The Russian strikes hit Dnipro and Ukraine’s southern Odesa region for the first time in weeks. Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, said a large fire erupted in Dnipro after the strikes on the city hit an industrial target.

The attack wounded at least 14 people, among them a teenage girl, and all were being treated in city hospitals, Reznichenko said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted on Telegram a video that he said was one of the blasts in Dnipro. The video from a vehicle dashcam shows a fiery blast engulfing a rainy road.

“This is another confirmation from Dnipro of how terrorists want peace,” Zelenskyy wrote, referring to the Kremlin’s forces. “The peaceful city and people’s wish to live their accustomed lives. Going to work, to their affairs. A rocket attack!”

Elsewhere, a Russian strike that hit a residential building killed at least four people overnight in Vilnia in the Zaporizhzhia region. Rescuers were combing the rubble for any other victims, according to Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official in the Ukrainian presidential office.

Critical infrastructure was also hit in the northeast Kharkiv region, in the area of Izyum, wounding three workers, the regional administration said.

Dnipro mayor Borys Filatov said in a Facebook post that one of his staff was among the wounded and showed a photo of what he said was her coat pierced by a piece of shrapnel.

An infrastructure target was hit on the Odesa region, Gov. Maksym Marchenko said on Telegram, warning about the threat of a “massive missile barrage on the entire territory of Ukraine.”

	<p>Officials in the Poltava, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi and Rivne regions urged residents to stay in bomb shelters.</p> <p>Thursday's blasts followed the huge barrage of Russian strikes on Tuesday. That was the biggest attack to date on Ukraine's energy infrastructure that also resulted in a missile hitting Poland.</p> <p>Russia has increasingly targeted Ukraine's power grid as winter approaches. The most recent barrage followed days of euphoria in Ukraine sparked by one of its biggest military successes — the retaking last week of the southern city of Kherson.</p> <p>The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andriy Yermak, called the strikes on energy targets “naive tactics of cowardly losers” in a Telegram post on Thursday.</p> <p>“Ukraine has already withstood extremely difficult strikes by the enemy, which did not lead to results the Russian cowards hoped for,” Yermak wrote, urging Ukrainians not to ignore air raid sirens.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the extension of the grain deal a “key decision in the global fight against the food crisis.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 NKorea: ‘fiercer’ response; fires missile
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/seoul-north-korea-fires-ballistic-missile-sea-93446031
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea launched a short-range ballistic missile toward its eastern waters Thursday, hours after the North threatened to launch “fiercer” military responses to the U.S. bolstering its security commitment to its allies South Korea and Japan.</p> <p>The missile fired from the North's eastern coastal Wonsan area at 10:48 a.m. landed in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to its neighbors. After detecting the launch, South Korean, U.S. and Japanese militaries quickly condemned the launch that they say threatens stability in the region.</p> <p>It was North Korea's first ballistic missile firing in eight days and the latest in its barrage of tests in recent months. North Korea previously said some of the tests were simulations of nuclear attacks on South Korean and U.S. targets. Many experts say North Korea would eventually want to enhance its nuclear capability to wrest bigger concessions from its rivals.</p> <p>Earlier Thursday, North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui warned that a recent U.S.-South Korea-Japan summit accord on the North would leave tensions on the Korean Peninsula “more unpredictable.”</p> <p>Choe's statement was North Korea's first official response to U.S. President Joe Biden's trilateral summit with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts on the sidelines of a regional gathering Sunday in Cambodia. In their joint statement, the three leaders strongly condemned North Korea's recent missile tests and agreed to work together to strengthen deterrence. Biden reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea and Japan with a full range of capabilities, including its nuclear arms.</p> <p>“The keener the U.S. is on the ‘bolstered offer of extended deterrence’ to its allies and the more they intensify provocative and bluffing military activities on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, the fiercer (North Korea's) military counteraction will be, in direct proportion to it,” Choe said. “It will pose a more serious, realistic and inevitable threat to the U.S. and its vassal forces.”</p> <p>Choe didn't say what steps North Korea could take but said that “the U.S. will be well aware that it is gambling, for which it will certainly regret.”</p> <p>South Korea's Defense Ministry responded later Thursday that the purpose of the trilateral summit was to coordinate a joint response to curb and deter advancing nuclear and missile threats by North Korea.</p>

Spokesperson Moon Hong Sik told reporters that security cooperation among Seoul, Washington and Tokyo was contributing to solidifying a U.S. extended deterrence to its allies.

The North Korean missile launched Thursday flew about 240 kilometers (150 miles) at the maximum altitude of 47 kilometers (29 miles), said South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff. It called the launch "a grave provocation" that undermines peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

Japan's Defense Ministry said that repeated missile launches by North Korea threaten the peace and safety of Japan, the region and the international society. The U.S.-Pacific Command said Thursday's launch "highlights the destabilizing impact of (North Korea's) unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs."

After the launch, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean and U.S. militaries staged missile defense drills earlier Thursday to review a combined readiness to North Korean provocations. But South Korean military officials refused to provide further details of the exercises, including whether they were already scheduled or were arranged after detecting signs of an imminent North Korean missile launch.

North Korea has steadfastly maintained its recent weapons testing activities are legitimate military counteractions to U.S.-South Korean military drills, which it views as a practice to launch attacks on the North. Washington and Seoul have said their exercises are defensive in nature.

In the past several years, annual military training between Seoul and Washington had been scaled back or canceled to support now-dormant diplomacy with North Korea and guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. But in recent months, South Korean and U.S. troops have expanded their regular exercises and resumed trilateral training with Japan in response to North Korea's push to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals.

In her statement Thursday, Choe said "the U.S. and its followers staged large-scale war drills for aggression one after another, but they failed to contain North Korea's overwhelming counteraction."

There have been concerns that North Korea might conduct its first nuclear test in five years as its next major step toward bolstering its military capability against the United States and its allies.

U.S. and South Korean officials say North Korea has finished preparations to conduct a nuclear test explosion in its remote testing facility in the northeast. Some experts say the test, if made, would be meant to develop nuclear warheads to be placed on short-range missiles capable of hitting key targets in South Korea, such as U.S. military bases.

Thursday's launch came a day after members the Group of 20 leading economies ended their summit in Indonesia. The summit was largely overshadowed with other issues like Russia's war on Ukraine, but Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol used their bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping to raise the issue of North Korea. The two had a trilateral summit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and discussed North Korea before traveling to Indonesia for the G-20 summit.

In their respective bilateral talks with Xi, Biden noted all members of the international community have an interest in encouraging North Korea to act responsibly, while Yoon called for China to play a more active, constructive role in addressing the North Korean nuclear threats.

China, the North's last major ally and biggest source of aid, is suspected of avoiding fully enforcing United Nations sanctions on North Korea and shipping clandestine assistance to the North to help its impoverished neighbor stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against U.S. influences on the Korean Peninsula.

Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/16 US: Russia cyber 'underperformed' Ukraine
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/russias-cyber-personnel-have-underperformed-in-ukraine-u-s-defense-official/
GIST	<p>A senior Pentagon official on Wednesday said that Russia's cyber personnel "underperformed" during the initial invasion of Ukraine, prompting it to ultimately rely less on digital attacks during the now months-long conflict than was expected.</p> <p>Speaking at the Aspen Cyber Summit, Mieke Eoyang, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for cyber policy, said Moscow "was not prepared for the conflict to go on as long as it did" and noted the Kremlin had sacrificed "intensity and sophistication" in order to rebuild its arsenal and avoid potential conflict that would draw in NATO.</p> <p>"We have to understand how those factors play against each other," Eoyang told the audience.</p> <p>Her remarks come as the war approaches its ninth month. And while Russian groups have been blamed for ransomware attacks and other malign activities against Kyiv, larger strikes on the country's critical infrastructure, like its electric grid, have not occurred.</p> <p>That absence, Eoyang said, should prompt the U.S. and other nations to reconsider how offensive cyber capabilities could be used in warfare.</p> <p>"We have to think very differently about how we think about armed conflict and cyber in light of this conflict," she said.</p> <p>In Ukraine, "the context of the armed conflict dwarfs the cyber impacts," she said. "Things that Russians tried to disrupt via cyber did not have the strategic impact that they wanted and they sought to destroy those things physically."</p> <p>Eoyang added that the Defense Department has experience maintaining secure government communications, but the war in Ukraine has introduced new challenges. In Ukraine, communications among the populace need to be secure and consistent, along with essential government functions and data.</p> <p>"This is the first conflict that we're seeing where the ability of people to tell their stories and their experiences of armed conflict is very different, and the information space here is a very different environment than what we've seen before."</p> <p>For months, the federal government has urged the private sector, and its own agencies, to keep their "shields up" against possible Russian digital attacks that stem from Moscow's assault on its former Soviet satellite state — a posture Eoyang said should be maintained.</p> <p>"We are seeing what happens when Russia is forced to make choices about how it allocates the cyber capacity that it has," she said. "I don't think any of us know what the escalation calculus is going to be, at what point we might be having to really think about attacks on U.S. infrastructure ... But it is really important that we are taking all the steps that we can to prepare."</p> <p>Recorded Future, the parent company of The Record, is a sponsor of the Aspen Cyber Summit.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Stop using Twitter to login other sites
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/stop-using-twitter-to-log-in-to-other-websites/
GIST	<p>With all of Twitter's ever-growing technical problems, I'd missed an elephant in the room-sized disaster. Fortunately, a friend reminded me that many people use Twitter's log-in as their login for other websites. Eep! You need to stop doing that <i>right now</i>.</p>

Why? Because part of Twitter's log-in system is already broken. Twitter's text [two-factor authentication \(2FA\)](#) started breaking on Monday, Nov. 14. This came after Twitter CEO Elon Musk announced that Twitter would be "[turning off the 'microservices' bloatware](#)."

Musk may be great at [launching rockets](#), but that may not translate to accuracy in identifying microservices bloatware.

One or more of those services was essential to [2FA \(two-factor authentication\)](#) using text messages. Text, aka SMS, 2FA is the most commonly used form of 2FA. The result of this removal is that if you had 2FA set to protect your account from hackers, you can no longer use it to change your password or log back in if you thumb-finger your password.

Ian Coldwater, Kubernetes Security co-chair and [Twilio](#) architect, who knows a thing or two about security and microservices, tweeted, "The [microservice that delivers SMS-based 2FA codes is broken](#). There are also reports of backup codes being broken. If you have SMS 2FA, don't log out."

Coldwater recommended staying logged in and changing your 2FA method from text message to email or an [authenticator app](#) or a [physical security key](#) (such as a [YubiKey](#)).

So much for Twitter. But, what's potentially even worse is if you use Twitter for [single-sign-on \(SSO\)](#) on other sites, you could also be blocked from them. As Coldwater tweeted, "If you have any apps or sites you log in to connected to your Twitter account via [OAuth](#), I STRONGLY recommend changing that right now while you still can."

To change your Twitter 2FA, go to Settings & Support > Settings & Privacy > Security & Account Access > Security > Two-factor authentication.

If text has been chosen for your 2FA method, switch from that to either an authenticator app or a security key. Just follow the instructions, and you should be fine... for now.

Another thing to keep in mind: You often see SSOs as an invitation on sites as an easy way to log in without creating yet another password. Instead, you just use your Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Apple, or Twitter login name and password instead.

That's fine. If you trust the major site to stay stable and [protect your data](#). But in the current circumstances, Twitter isn't trustworthy in that sense.

You should immediately go to those sites where you use Twitter to log in and replace it with something -- anything -- else. To find out which sites you're using Twitter as your SSO for, go to the Twitter app or website and check Settings & Support > Settings & Privacy > Security & Account Access > Apps & sessions.

Once there, check Connected Apps for applications that have read-write permissions to Twitter or vice versa. Then, check Account access history for sites that have used Twitter for logins recently.

Armed with this information, go to the sites and services you've found and switch to another, more stable login and password. The way things are going, it's only a matter of time before there's another Twitter tech crackup, and you don't want to be locked out of other sites [when -- not if -- Twitter fails](#).

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HEADLINE	11/16 OIG: HHS faces persistent cyber threats
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/zero-trust/persistent-cybersecurity-threats-impede-hhs-strategic-plans-watchdog-warns

As the Department of Health and Human Services moves toward greater interoperability across the healthcare sector, the agency must make greater efforts to modernize its approach to cybersecurity, according to a new report from the Office of the Inspector General.

The report, "[Top Management and Performance Challenges Facing HHS](#)," details the complex challenges facing the healthcare regulator, with a section dedicated to cybersecurity concerns.

OIG found that HHS has taken strides to improve its posture, particularly after the Biden administration's May 2021 executive order directing federal agencies to "fundamentally and systemically change their approach to cybersecurity."

HHS is currently in the process of finalizing its strategic plan, but the path forward has been wrought with challenges faced across the government and healthcare sectors: persistent cybersecurity threats. And the report notes that it will "require significant investments in resources as well as cultural and organizational change."

HHS has long [struggled to meet the challenges](#) facing its information security program, with yearly reports from both OIG and the Government Accountability Office consistently deeming the program "not effective," under the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) metrics.

Released in April, the last OIG audit found HHS failed to meet the "managed and measurable" maturity level for all five elements for the identifying, protecting, detecting, and recovering function elements required by Department of Homeland Security guidance and FISMA.

Namely, HHS struggled with its supply chain risk management, which HHS "only assessed at the domain level and [it was] not factored into the conclusion of the function or overall effectiveness of HHS information security program for FY 2021 in accordance with the IG FISMA Reporting Metrics guidance.

Overall, risk management was not yet at a managed and maturity level, which led to the OIG's negative assessment.

HHS operating environment adds to complexity of meeting requirements

HHS is looking to rectify these vulnerabilities to meet the executive order's requirements for federal agencies on specific cybersecurity standards and objectives by the end of fiscal year 2024, which includes the adoption of a zero trust security architecture approach.

To meet these requirements, HHS must make serious organizational changes in how it implements security across its divisions and programs to ensure its assets and resources are protected at all times.

However, OIG noted that the "persistent and growing cybersecurity threats exacerbate the challenges facing HHS associated with data and technologies used to carry out the vital health and human service missions" of its divisions. If these threats aren't mitigated, HHS program operations and the health and welfare of individuals it services will remain at risk.

In fact, HHS operating divisions faced numerous sophisticated phishing and business email compromise attacks on its employees this year alone, which OIG expects to worsen into the foreseeable future — especially as more devices and technologies are introduced into the network.

The report notes that HHS' challenges are "multifaceted and complex because program needs and timeliness often compete with cybersecurity controls and capabilities." OIG noted that HHS will need to require its divisions to "take a risk-based approach for rapid system development and deployment" if it hopes to meet the executive requirements and reduce risk.

As part of the needed shift, HHS will need to better understand the current risk presented by ongoing cybersecurity threats and the value of protecting technology and data.

The agency is also facing the persistent challenge brought on by a federated nature of IT and cybersecurity environments: a “vast network of interdependent, increasingly digital health, social, and administrative services.” At this scale, HHS must simultaneously address the range of cybersecurity requirements alongside its specific data and technological needs.

The report shows that 24 of the 28 National Institutes of Health receive congressional funding and administer their own budgets, with their own leadership, while its Indian Health Services uses a decentralized environment for its headquarters, offices, and care sites with their own health mandates as they provide direct patient care.

“This type of environment poses challenges to IHS’s ability to assess, manage, and respond to cybersecurity threats, as well as modernize cybersecurity approaches in order to become resilient in the face of persistent threats,” the report authors wrote. HHS also has thousands of contractors, grantees, and other partners with their own cybersecurity capabilities.

These all exacerbate the complexity of securing the environment, and as the datasets created by all of these partners “continue to grow, the ability to prevent bad actors from directly and indirectly inferring personally identifiable information is a challenge.”

What’s more, OIG believes the ownership of this data is sometimes unclear and stressed that HHS must improve these key areas to ensure all partners are using adequate data protections and developing a risk-based approach HHS is working to finalize its data strategy to approve how it collects, manages, shares, and secures its data, as it expands its technological capabilities and refines “its approach to influence and shape how other entities use technology.” Among its challenges are the large amounts of critical data from disparate sources “on an unprecedented scale.”

OIG believes it’s imperative for the agency to manage these challenges and make “foundational improvements.”

“Continued modernization of HHS data and technology capabilities is needed for HHS and its divisions to fulfill their missions, improve situational awareness, and better prepare for future public health threats and emergencies,” according to the OIG report.

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HEADLINE	11/16 State-backed APT group activity continues
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/state-backed-apt-group-activity/
GIST	<p>High levels of advanced persistent threat (APT) group activity from Russia, China, Iran and North Korea has continued since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to the ESET APT Activity Report T2 2022.</p> <p>ESET researchers analyzed cyber activities of many of these groups, which are usually operated by a nation-state or by state-sponsored actors, during the period May to August 2022. Their activities are generally undertaken for the purposes of harvesting sensitive data from governments, high-profile individuals or strategic companies.</p> <p>Jean-Ian Boutin, director of ESET Threat Research told <i>Infosecurity</i> that while APT groups in the four countries are continuing to be highly active, there have been no signs of coordination between these regions.</p> <p>“We have not seen signs of collaboration between groups that have a different country alignment. They sometimes target the same organizations, but we have no evidence that they are collaborating. We believe that in those cases, they have similar goals and thus, overlapping targets,” he commented.</p> <p>Russia</p> <p>Unsurprisingly, Russia-aligned APT groups were particularly active in targeting Ukraine over the four-month period. One of the most “continuously active” was Gamaredon, which the report noted has been prominent in targeting Ukrainian government entities throughout 2022. This group “constantly modifies its</p>

tools to evade detection mechanisms,” said the report, and has recently started to use a third-party service, ip-api.com, for resolving IP addresses of its C&C servers instead of regular DNS.

Other Russian APT groups highlighted for their role in targeting Ukraine over this period included Sandworm, Gamaredon, InvisiMole, Callista and Turla. Sandworm, which [ESET linked](#) to an attempt to deploy a new version of Industroyer malware against high-voltage electrical substation in Ukraine in April 2022, has since used the ArguePatch loader to launch payloads like CaddyWiper. This has impacted at least three Ukrainian organizations, two of which were local governments, said the report.

ESET believes Sandworm is using social media platform Telegram to leak information stolen during CaddyWiper campaigns, an approach increasingly being taken by other Russian APT actors.

“We have noticed that in T2 2022, several Russia-aligned groups used the Russian multiplatform messaging service Telegram to access C&C servers or as an instrument to leak information. Threat actors from other regions were also trying to gain access to Ukrainian organizations, both for cyber espionage and intellectual property theft,” commented Boutin.

Despite the continued attacks, speaking exclusively to *Infosecurity*, Boutin noted “a slow-down in the operations of threat actors targeting Ukrainian organizations.”

He explained: “In the first few months of the war, we were seeing more attacks using various wiper families targeting a wider array of organizations. In the past few months, we saw wiper campaigns as well, but mostly using CaddyWiper and on a much slower cadence than at the beginning of the conflict.”

"Threat actors from other regions were also trying to gain access to Ukrainian organizations, both for cyber espionage and intellectual property theft"

This slow-down may be partly explained by the resilience of Ukraine’s cyber-defenses, which has been [praised](#) by the UK’s National Cyber Security Centre CEO Lindy Cameron.

China

Numerous China-aligned APT groups remained highly active between May and August 2022, according to the study. These include SparklingGoblin, which ESET believe was behind an attack using a Linux version of the SideWalk backdoor against a Hong Kong University in February 2021.

The researchers also attributed SparklingGoblin with an attack on a food manufacturing company in Germany by leveraging a Confluence vulnerability ([CVE-2022-026134](#)) and automating the initial compromise. They suspect the same vulnerability helped the group gain access to a Confluence server of an engineering company based in the US.

Additionally, ESET believe a Chinese APT group may have been behind an attack on a US defense contractor, following the compromise of a web-based password management and single sign-on product. However, “we haven’t yet found enough similarities to make a good attribution to a known group.”

The firm suspects [CVE-2022-28810](#) was exploited in this incident, just two days after it was disclosed. This “highlights the necessity of updating internet-facing software as soon as possible,” stated the report. Iran

The notorious Iranian APT group POLONIUM targeted [more than a dozen Israeli organizations](#) in the report’s time frame. The researchers highlighted the espionage group’s continuous adaptations to its custom tools to avoid detection.

Another well-known threat actor, APT3, has targeted various industries in Israel, such as cosmetics retailing, cybersecurity holding companies, electronics manufacturing and legal services. This campaign has been active since at least October 2021, according to the report, and uses different versions of the SponsoredRunner backdoor to target organizations.

Other active Iran-aligned APT groups over this period were Agrius, APT-C-50 and OilRig, with Israeli organizations the most common targets.

North Korea

The most infamous North Korean threat group, [Lazarus](#), has been involved in several spearphishing campaigns using the lure of fake job offers to compromise sensitive industries. One of these targeted an employee of an aerospace company in the Netherlands, resulting in an email with a malicious document attachment. The attackers delivered a user-mode module that gained the ability to read and write kernel memory due to the CVE-2021-21551 vulnerability in a legitimate Dell driver.

Boutin outlined: “The aerospace and defense industry remains of interest to North Korea-aligned groups – Lazarus targeted an employee of an aerospace company in the Netherlands. According to our research, the group abused a vulnerability in a legitimate Dell driver to infiltrate the company, and we believe this to be the first-ever recorded abuse of this vulnerability in the wild.”

In another campaign, an individual in Argentina was targeted with malware disguised as a fake offer at Coinbase, a cryptocurrency exchange. Other North Korea-aligned groups that were active in the four-month period were Kimsuky and Konni.

Final Thoughts

Concluding the report, ESET researchers noted that while APT groups’ attacks are often directed at governmental bodies, “entities and individuals working within other mentioned targeted profiles should also maintain a heightened state of awareness.”

They continued: “Several cases in this report clearly show that acquired technology is not the only type of protection that should be deployed, but that organizations must also increase the overall cybersecurity awareness of their employees. A special area of focus here should be on spearphishing, as this is one of the most used initial compromise vectors seen in the described activities.”

In early November 2022, Microsoft [reported](#) a “disturbing” rise in aggressive nation-state cyber activity in the past year.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Massive surge in TrojanOrders attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/magento-stores-targeted-in-massive-surge-of-trojanorders-attacks/
GIST	<p>At least seven hacking groups are behind a massive surge in 'TrojanOrders' attacks targeting Magento 2 websites, exploiting a vulnerability that allows the threat actors to compromise vulnerable servers.</p> <p>Website security firm Sansec warned that almost 40% of Magento 2 websites are being targeted by the attacks, with hacking groups fighting each other over control of an infected site.</p> <p>These attacks are being used to inject malicious JavaScript code into an online store's website that can cause significant business disruption and massive customer credit card theft during a busy Black Friday and Cyber Monday period.</p> <p>The trend is expected to continue as we head towards Christmas when online shops are at their most critical and simultaneously most vulnerable time.</p> <p>The TrojanOrders attack</p> <p>TrojanOrders is the name of an attack that exploits the critical Magento 2 CVE-2022-24086 vulnerability, allowing unauthenticated attackers to execute code and inject RATs (remote access trojans) on unpatched websites.</p>

Adobe fixed CVE-2022-24086 in February 2022, but Sansec says many Magento sites still need to be patched.

"Sansec estimates that at least a third of all Magento and Adobe Commerce stores have not been patched so far," explains a [new report](#) by eCommerce cybersecurity firm SanSec.

When [conducting TrojanOrders attacks](#), hackers typically create an account on the target website and place an order that contains malicious template code in the name, VAT, or other fields.

For example, the above attack will inject a copy of the 'health_check.php' file on the site, containing a PHP backdoor that can run commands sent via POST requests.

After gaining a foothold on the website, the attackers install a remote access trojan to establish permanent access and the ability to perform more intricate actions.

In many cases observed by Sansec, the attackers scanned for the presence of 'health_check.php' upon compromise to determine if another hacker had already infected the site, and if so, replace the file with their own backdoor.

The attackers ultimately modify the site to include malicious JavaScript that steals customers' information and credit card numbers when purchasing products in the store.

Why is there a surge after so long?

Sansec's analysts believe that there are multiple reasons we are seeing a surge in attacks targeting this vulnerability.

First, a large number of Magento 2 sites remain vulnerable to these attacks, even ten months after the patches became available.

Second, PoC (proof of concept) exploits have been available for a long time, allowing exploit kit authors to incorporate them into their tools and profit by selling them to low-skilled hackers.

These Magento exploits are so abundant they are sold for as low as \$2,500, whereas in early 2022, they cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

Finally, the timing is ideal for these attacks, as websites are seeing increased traffic due to the holiday season, meaning malicious orders and code injections may be more likely to be overlooked.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Swiss arrest cybercrime ringleader
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/suspected-zeus-cybercrime-ring-leader-tank-arrested-by-swiss-police/
GIST	<p>Vyacheslav Igorevich Penchukov, also known as Tank and one of the leaders of the notorious JabberZeus cybercrime gang, was arrested in Geneva last month.</p> <p>The Swiss Federal Office of Justice (FOJ) said Penchukov was arrested last month and is waiting to be extradited to the United States, although he can still appeal FOJ's decision.</p> <p>"By order of the Federal Office of Justice (FOJ) and based on an extradition request from the USA, a Ukrainian national was arrested in the Canton of Geneva on 23 October 2022 and detained pending extradition," Swiss prosecutors told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"The US authorities accuse the prosecuted person of extortion, bank fraud, and identity theft, among other things. During the hearing on 24 October 2022, the person did not consent to his extradition to the USA via a simplified proceeding.</p>

"After completion of the formal extradition procedure, the FOJ has decided to grant his extradition to the USA on 15 November 2022. The decision of the FOJ may be appealed at the Swiss Criminal Federal Court, respectively at the Swiss Supreme Court."

Cybersecurity journalist Brian Krebs first [reported](#) that Penchukov was arrested while traveling to Geneva to meet with his wife.

From stealing bank accounts to ransomware

The U.S. Department of Justice [first charged](#) Penchukov in 2012, accusing him of being involved in a conspiracy to steal millions of dollars using bank account numbers, passwords, personal identification numbers, and other sensitive info stolen using the notorious Zeus malware.

Multiple sources previously told BleepingComputer that Penchukov was also one of the managers of the Maze and Egregor ransomware operations.

Maze ransomware popularized [double-extortion attacks](#), where the threat actors also stole data and used it as further leverage to pressure victims into paying a ransom. [Maze later rebranded](#) to the Egregor and Sekhmet operations to evade law enforcement.

BleepingComputer was also told that he was among the suspects arrested in January 2021 by Ukrainian police following an international law enforcement operation [targeting Egregor ransomware gang members](#). However, according to Krebs' report, he was able to evade prosecution with the help of his political connections, including the late son of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

As one of [JabberZeus cybercrime ring's leaders](#), Penchukov managed the stolen banking credentials and the money mules who wired money from the victims' accounts into those controlled by the cybercriminals. Together with eight other suspects, he was [charged](#) with conspiring to participate in "racketeering activity, conspiracy to commit computer fraud and identity theft, aggravated identity theft, and multiple counts of bank fraud."

Two of his co-conspirators, Ukrainian nationals Yevhen Kulibaba and Yuriy Konovalenko, pleaded guilty in November 2014 after being extradited from the UK and [were sentenced](#) to two years and ten months of incarceration in May 2015.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Spain busts pirated TV streaming network
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/police-dismantle-pirated-tv-streaming-network-with-500-000-users/
GIST	<p>The Spanish police have dismantled a network of pirated streaming sites that illegally distributed content from 2,600 TV channels and 23,000 movies and series to roughly 500,000 users.</p> <p>The law enforcement action took place in a joint operation involving the Spanish police and EUROPOL, resulting in the arrest of four operators in Malaga.</p> <p>Additionally, 95 resellers in Spain, Malta, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, and the United Kingdom have been identified.</p> <p>The pirated TV network used numerous websites to advertise and promote subscription-based streaming services, listing unlimited access to channels from different platforms.</p> <p>The live streams from these platforms were decoded with stolen or abused accounts and passwords and then re-broadcasted to the subscribers' video player clients.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The resellers bought the subscription packages from the organization operators and resold them to thousands of people in their local countries to profit from the price difference.</p> <p>"The profits obtained, which amounted to around three million Euros per year, were laundered by the organization, acquiring movable and immovable property in the province of Malaga and diverting funds through Spanish companies to bank accounts located in tax havens." Policia España.</p> <p>During the searches in the suspects' locations, law enforcement found ten administration panels connected to 32 streaming servers spread across France, Spain, and the Netherlands, that hosted the content mentioned above.</p> <p>The police disconnected these administration panels, taking the pirate platform offline, and seized computer equipment, 2,800 Euros in cash, and vehicles worth approximately 180,000 Euros.</p> <p>The authorities will continue investigations to determine if further core members of the pirate network are operating in Spain or other countries.</p> <p>According to the police announcement, the pirated streaming network had been operating since 2012, constantly evading detection by setting up new shell companies.</p> <p>Notably, investigations on this content piracy case started in 2020 after a complaint filed by the Alliance for Creativity (ACE).</p> <p>ACE is an intellectual property protection coalition that recently shut down 42 websites in Latin America for illegally streaming soccer games to millions of users.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 FBI: Iranian group hacked federal agency
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-iranian-hackers-breached-federal-agency-using-log4shell-exploit/
GIST	<p>The FBI and CISA revealed in a joint advisory published today that an unnamed Iranian-backed threat group hacked a Federal Civilian Executive Branch (FCEB) organization to deploy XMRig cryptomining malware.</p> <p>The attackers compromised the federal network after hacking into an unpatched VMware Horizon server using an exploit targeting the Log4Shell (CVE-2021-44228) remote code execution vulnerability.</p> <p>After deploying the cryptocurrency miner, the Iranian threat actors also set up reverse proxies on compromised servers to maintain persistence within the FCEB agency's network.</p> <p>"In the course of incident response activities, CISA determined that cyber threat actors exploited the Log4Shell vulnerability in an unpatched VMware Horizon server, installed XMRig crypto mining software, moved laterally to the domain controller (DC), compromised credentials, and then implanted Ngrok reverse proxies on several hosts to maintain persistence," the joint advisory reads.</p> <p>The two U.S. federal agencies added that all organizations who haven't yet patched their VMware systems against Log4Shell should assume that they've already been breached and advise them to start hunting for malicious activity within their networks.</p> <p>CISA warned in June that VMware Horizon and Unified Access Gateway (UAG) servers are still being preyed upon by multiple threat actors, including state-sponsored hacking groups, using Log4Shell exploits. Log4Shell can be exploited remotely to target vulnerable servers exposed to local or Internet access to move laterally across breached networks to access internal systems that store sensitive data.</p> <p>Ongoing Log4Shell exploitation by state hackers</p>

	<p>After its disclosure in December 2021, multiple threat actors almost immediately began scanning for and exploiting systems left unpatched.</p> <p>The list of attackers includes state-backed hacking groups from China, Iran, North Korea, and Turkey, as well as access brokers known for their close ties with some ransomware gangs.</p> <p>CISA also advised organizations with vulnerable VMware servers to assume they were breached and initiate threat-hunting activities.</p> <p>VMware also urged customers in January to secure their VMware Horizon servers against Log4Shell attack attempts as soon as possible.</p> <p>Since January, Internet-exposed VMware Horizon servers have been hacked by Chinese-speaking threat actors to deploy Night Sky ransomware, the Lazarus North Korean APT to deploy information stealers, and the Iranian-aligned TunnelVision hacking group to deploy backdoors.</p> <p>In today's advisory, CISA and the FBI strongly advised organizations to apply recommended mitigations and defensive measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating affected VMware Horizon and unified access gateway (UAG) systems to the latest version. • Minimizing your organization's internet-facing attack surface. • Exercising, testing, and validating your organization's security program against the threat behaviors mapped to the MITRE ATT&CK for Enterprise framework in the CSA. • Testing your organization's existing security controls against the ATT&CK techniques described in the advisory.
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HEADLINE	11/16 Ukraine 'IT army' battles Russia attacks
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/ukraine-it-army-stops-1300-cyberattacks-war
GIST	<p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke to the G20 Summit's "Digital Transformation" panel this week, offering the benefits of his embattled country's cyber-defense experience to G20-allied countries.</p> <p>Zelensky noted that Ukraine's "IT army," made up of talent pooled from companies across the country, has successfully stopped more than 1,300 Russian cyberattacks over the past eight months of the Russian invasion. That experience, he said, offers lessons for protecting civilian populations from the kinds of brutal cyberattacks that have been leveled against his country as part of Russia's invasion.</p> <p>For instance, after Russia destroyed a major data center in the country, Ukraine switched to the cloud, allowing it to build public registers and make payments to citizens effected by the war, he said. The country's Diia state site is operating and able to provide 100 contactless public services, including providing digital passports, accepting tax payments, and more, Zelensky said during his speech to the G20.</p> <p>"My good advice to you is to take Ukrainian defense experience in order to guarantee the safety of your people," Zelensky said. "Ukraine is willing to help. Our security experience is your security experience. And please remember that everything must now be considered from the point of view of security."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Billbug APT infiltrates certificate authority
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/china-based-billbug-apt-infiltrates-certificate-authority
GIST	The state-sponsored cyberattack group known as Billbug managed to compromise a digital certificate authority (CA) as part of an wide-ranging espionage campaign that stretched back to March — a concerning development in the advanced persistent threat (APT) playbook, researchers warn.

Digital certificates are files that are used to sign software as valid, and verify the identity of a device or user to enable encrypted connections. As such, a CA compromise could lead to a legion of stealthy follow-on attacks.

"The targeting of a certificate authority is notable, as if the attackers were able to successfully compromise it to access certificates, they could potentially use them to sign malware with a valid certificate, and help it avoid detection on victim machines," according to [a report](#) this week from Symantec. "It could also potentially use compromised certificates to intercept HTTPS traffic."

"This is potentially very dangerous," the researchers noted.

An Ongoing Spate of Cyber-Compromises

Billbug (aka Lotus Blossom or Thrip) is a China-based espionage group that mainly targets victims in Southeast Asia. It's known for big-game hunting — i.e., going after the secrets held by military organizations, governmental entities, and communications providers. Sometimes it casts a broader net, hinting at darker motivations: In one past instance, it infiltrated an aerospace operator to infect the computers that monitor and control the movements of satellites.

In the latest run of nefarious activity, the APT hit a pantheon of government and defense agencies throughout Asia, in one case infesting "a large number of machines" on a government network with its custom malware.

"This campaign was ongoing from at least March 2022 to September 2022, and it is possible this activity may be ongoing," says Brigid O Gorman, senior intelligence analyst at Symantec Threat Hunter Team.

"Billbug is a long-established threat group that has carried out multiple campaigns over the years. It is possible that this activity could extend to additional organizations or geographies, though Symantec has no evidence of that at the moment."

A Familiar Approach to Cyberattacks

At those targets as well as at the CA, the initial access vector has been the exploitation of vulnerable, public-facing applications. After gaining the ability to execute code, the threat actors go on to install their known, custom Hannotog or Sagerunex backdoors before burrowing deeper into networks.

For the later kill-chain stages, Billbug attackers use multiple [living-off-the-land binaries \(LoLBins\)](#), such as AdFind, Certutil, NBTscan, Ping, Port Scanner, Route, Tracert, Winmail, and WinRAR, according to Symantec's report.

These legitimate tools can be abused for various doppelganger uses, such as querying Active Directory to map a network, ZIP-ing files for exfiltration, uncovering paths between endpoints, scanning NetBIOS and ports, and installing browser root certificates — not to mention downloading additional malware.

The custom backdoors combined with dual-use tools is a familiar footprint, having been used by the APT in the past. But the lack of concern about public exposure is [par for the course for the group](#).

"It's notable that Billbug appears to be undeterred by the possibility of having this activity attributed to it, with it reusing tools that have been linked to the group in the past," says Gorman.

She adds, "The group's heavy use of living off the land and dual-use tools is also notable, and underlines the need for organizations to have in place security products that can not only detect malware, but can [also recognize if legitimate tools are potentially being used](#) in a suspicious or malicious manner."

Symantec has notified the unnamed CA in question to inform it of the activity, but Gorman declined to offer further details as to its response or remediation efforts.

	<p>While there's no indication so far that the group was able to go on to compromise actual digital certificates, the researcher advises, "Enterprises should be aware that malware could be signed with valid certificates if threat actors are able to achieve access to cert authorities."</p> <p>In general, organizations should adopt a defense-in-depth strategy, using multiple detection, protection, and hardening technologies to mitigate risk at each point of a potential attack chain, she says.</p> <p>"Symantec would also advise implementing proper audit and control of administrative account usage," Gorman noted. "We'd also suggest creating profiles of usage for admin tools as many of these tools are used by attackers to move laterally undetected through a network. Across the board, multifactor authentication (MFA) can help limit the usefulness of compromised credentials."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Amazon RDS snapshots leaking PII
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/cloud/thousands-amazon-rds-snapshots-leaking-corporate-pii
GIST	<p>Legions of databases are being inadvertently exposed monthly, through a feature of an Amazon cloud-based data-backup service. The situation gives threat actors access to personally identifiable information (PII) that they can use in extortion, ransomware, or other threat activity, researchers have found.</p> <p>Amazon RDS is a popular platform-as-a-service that provides a database based on several optional engines, including MySQL and PostgreSQL. An RDS snapshot, or a storage volume snapshot of a database instance, is an intuitive feature that helps organizations back up their databases, allowing users to share public data or a template database to an application, researchers said.</p> <p>The Mitiga Research Team recently discovered the leaks in the form of numerous Amazon Relationship Database Service (RDS) snapshots that are being shared publicly — whether intentionally or by mistake.</p> <p>Over the course of one month, the researchers said that they observed 2,783 RDS snapshots, 810 of which were exposed publicly during the entire time frame. Additionally, 1,859 snapshots of the 2,783 were exposed for one to two days, which is still enough time for attackers to pounce upon the leak, they reported.</p> <p>Individuals within an organization also can share these snapshots with colleagues by using the feature without having to worry about user profiles or roles — a scenario that leads to the snapshot being shared publicly, the researchers said.</p> <p>"These snapshots can be shared across different [Amazon Web Services] accounts — in or out of the on-premises organization, as well as AWS accounts that make the RDS snapshots publicly available," the researchers wrote. "With that, one might unintentionally leak sensitive data to the world, even if you use highly secure network configuration."</p> <p>Some of the exposures last for months, and some for just a short period of time, in both cases potentially allowing threat actors to take advantage, they said in a blog post shared online Nov. 16.</p> <p>Uncovering Cloud Misconfigurations & User Errors</p> <p>The exposure once again highlights the potential for exploitation of the fragile security posture of cloud-based services that allow for enterprise resources to be shared on the public Internet, Mitiga researchers Ariel Szarf, Doron Karmi, and Lionel Saposnik noted in the post.</p> <p>"Attackers are always looking for new ways to put their hands on confidential information of organizations, mostly for financial gain," they wrote. "Some cloud services that allow sharing cloud resources widely to the world [are] exposing a new threat to organizations — unintentional sharing of information through resources like disk snapshots (EBS), or in our case DB snapshots (RDS)."</p>

To conduct their research, the Mitiga team developed a AWS-native technique, using AWS Lambda Step Function and boto3, that can easily be integrated into an AWS environment and customized to investigate snapshot exposure.

Unfortunately, attackers also can develop such a tool to view public snapshots and perform the same tasks, allowing them to steal data from these public-facing resources and abuse it later to extort money from organizations that own it, the researchers said.

The researchers outlined several specific instances in which they could access data from exposed snapshots during a month-long investigation.

One was a MySQL database exposed for the entire month that appeared to be from a car rental agency. Exposed data included information from car-rental transactions, including PII of customers; business-knowledge data such as the type of cars in the company's fleet; and other specific rental information.

Another snapshot exposed for less than four hours came from a database of a now-defunct dating application that included a user table containing emails, password hashes, birth dates, links to personal images, private messages, and other personal data of about 2,200 users of the app.

No PII? Still a Problem

Even if an RDS snapshot that's exposed publicly includes no PII, there is still a way for threat actors to find out who the database and thus its data belongs to, the researchers said.

In their investigation, they were able to identify who owned account IDs for many snapshots by simply looking at the snapshot name and seeing the company name in it, they said.

Moreover, every snapshot metadata contains a field called "MasterUsername," which is the main database username, the researchers explained. In many cases, that username includes either the name of the company that owns the database fully spelled out or identified in acronyms and shortcuts; or a name of a person working at the company, they said.

In the latter case, by using a method that they admitted was "a little creepy, but useful," researchers conducted LinkedIn searches to find out where the people identified in the username worked, noting that this is a method threat actors could employ to do the same.

Mitigating the Problem

As many organizations using Amazon RDS may not even know if they have public snapshots, identifying if there are any in their respective environments is the first step toward mitigating the issue, the researchers said.

Helpfully, Amazon sends an email quickly to users if they share a snapshot publicly, notifying them about the public snapshot to ensure that it was intended to be publicly available. In the case of a test done by the researchers, this email was received 23 minutes after exposure.

Researchers also outlined a step-by-step way to conduct a historical check using CloudTrail logs to discover if someone created a public snapshot that potentially can be abused.

To prevent the creation of public Amazon RDS snapshots at all, enterprises should manage permissions well by adopting a practice of "least-privilege permissions," giving them only on a strict, as-needed basis.

They also can set service control policies (SCPs), which are AWS organizational-level policies that can specify the maximum permissions for an organization, researchers said. Applying SCP on an AWS root account to deny certain operations on RDS snapshot will prevent unintended sharing of RDS DBs, they said.

	<p>Organizations also can encrypt snapshots in AWS using a KMS key, and the researchers confirmed in their investigation that it's not possible to share a snapshot publicly encrypted in this way, they said.</p> <p>One roadblock to mitigation is that currently there's no way to know if someone has copied a public snapshot of an Amazon RDS database, as there is no log event for copying a public snapshot to another account or restoring a database instance from another account in the snapshot owner's account, the researchers said.</p> <p>Mitiga approached AWS about the issue and, upon confirmation that "logging an RDS copy and restore operation is currently unavailable," made a feature request to support its addition to the platform, researchers said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 FBI raid homes; Area 51 website probe
SOURCE	https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/military/air-force-fbi-raid-homes-in-probe-of-area-51-website-2677764/
GIST	<p>Agents from the U.S. Air Force and FBI recently raided homes in Clark and Lincoln counties in an investigation of a man who operates a website about the top-secret military base known as Area 51, a spokesman said Wednesday.</p> <p>The Air Force Office of Special Investigations and FBI entered homes owned by Joerg Arnu in Las Vegas and the tiny town of Rachel on Nov. 3 and seized potential evidence for an undisclosed joint agency probe, according to Lt. Col. Bryon McGarry, spokesman for Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas.</p> <p>"This is an open and ongoing law enforcement investigation between the Las Vegas FBI and Air Force OSI," McGarry said in a statement.</p> <p>He declined to elaborate on the basis for the investigation, but Arnu, of Las Vegas, is the webmaster of a site titled Dreamland Resort, focusing on Area 51, an Air Force base in Lincoln County about 120 miles northwest of Las Vegas where testing is conducted on new and classified U.S. military aircraft.</p> <p>Dreamland Resort, at dreamlandresort.com, started by Arnu in 1999, features YouTube videos taken from drones flown over places around Area 51, satellite images of the base, a discussion forum with posts on the topic, articles on test flights, "black projects" and UFOs, and what it says are photos of new vehicles such as the so-called "super secret" Northrop Grumman RQ-180 unmanned stealth aircraft shown flying in 2021.</p> <p>Arnu, reached by email Wednesday, declined comment until he can speak to his attorney. But he forwarded a news release posted on his web page last week telling his side of the story.</p> <p>"I believe the search, executed with completely unnecessary force by overzealous government agents was meant as a message to silence the Area 51 research community," he said.</p> <p>Arnu said both his homes were raided "without warning" on Nov. 3 "by 15-20 agents in full riot gear." The agents broke open the doors while Arnu was in the Rachel home and his girlfriend at the Las Vegas one, and then they "were detained and treated in the most disrespectful way."</p> <p>"My girlfriend was led out into the street barefoot and only in her underwear in full view of the neighbors," he said. "I was led outside, handcuffed and only in a t-shirt and sweats in sub-freezing temperatures."</p> <p>After asking the agents why they came, "I was only told that the search was related to images posted on my Area 15 website."</p> <p>During the raid, he claimed that all of his "laptops, phones, backup drives, camera gear and my drone were seized," which meant he lost medical, tax and financial records, personal contacts and photos. He estimated the damage cost to his home at \$5,000 and the value of the confiscated equipment at \$20,000.</p>

	<p>“Even my phone was taken, leaving me in Rachel with two broken doors and no way to communicate or call for help,” he said.</p> <p>Arnu claims the warrant for the search had 40 pages missing and the case file was sealed, preventing him from reading about it. The FBI had not returned his phone calls, he added.</p> <p>“At this point I have no choice but to take legal action to try and get my equipment back and to seek reimbursement for the damage,” he said.</p> <p>Sandy Breault, an FBI spokeswoman, stated in an email that the agency “declines to comment.”</p> <p>To try to “defuse the situation,” Arnu said he decided to take down some of the material on his site “although I believe that it was legally obtained and legal to publish. I’m not sharing anything on my website that cannot be found on dozens of other websites and news outlet publications.”</p> <p>He said he would not be removing anything further unless ordered to do so by a federal judge.</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	11/17 US out, China comes calling in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-11-17/china-interest-afghanistan-trade-economics-stabilization
GIST	<p>KABUL — The first thing you see walking out of Kabul’s airport is a billboard advertising Chinatown, which, if you visit, turns out to be a plain, off-white trio of 10-story towers in the Afghan capital’s Taimani district. On the ground floor are shops selling Chinese products, including lights, office furniture, fans, electric bicycles, kitchen equipment, garden tools, pipe fittings, solar panels, toiletries, clothes, decorations and Clean Laundry detergent, which promises “disintegration of the stain.”</p> <p>Most visitors’ first stop is the office of Yu Minghui, the 51-year-old entrepreneur who started Chinatown in 2019 and who doubles as chairman of the China-Afghanistan Trade Committee, a semiofficial liaison office for Yu’s passion project: bringing Chinese merchants to Afghanistan.</p> <p>The office helps them obtain visas, navigate the market and make connections. Those who like their chances can join Chinatown or rent space in Yu’s newest undertaking, a sprawling 350-acre, \$216-million industrial park on Kabul’s northeastern edge — the first infrastructure project signed between a Chinese company and the Taliban government.</p> <p>“They want to help foreigners invest here,” Yu said of Afghanistan’s hard-line Islamic rulers. “The government is now supporting us.”</p> <p>Behind his efforts is at least the tacit support of another government: his own. With the West focused on Ukraine and the U.S. refusing to deal with a Taliban-led state, China sees an opportunity to extend its influence in its backyard, using commercial ties to help forge a stable regional order and demonstrate that its brand of economic diplomacy — buttressed by a steadfast policy of noninterference in domestic affairs — can achieve success where Washington’s 20-year misadventure in Afghanistan could not.</p> <p>The efforts are nothing like the United States’ gargantuan nation-building campaign. Instead, Beijing’s goal is to neutralize the dangers from what has long been a problematic neighbor, while pursuing wider policies such as its Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to develop international infrastructure links, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a \$62-billion project to construct transportation networks, energy infrastructure and special economic zones, which Beijing wants to extend to include Afghanistan.</p>

“The U.S.’ was a transformational project. China is about stabilization,” said Jennifer Murtazashvili, an expert on Central Asia at the University of Pittsburgh. “China’s interest in Afghanistan is primarily about security, and it sees the security stabilization of Afghanistan through its economic development, which is also beneficial to China.”

Others see in Beijing’s efforts a logical desire to encourage economic development in a strategically situated nation closer to home.

“If China can [invest billions of dollars in Africa](#), why can’t it invest a bit more than it did in the past in its neighbor?” said Zhou Bo, a former colonel in the People’s Liberation Army who is now a senior fellow at Tsinghua University’s Center for International Security and Strategy in Beijing.

The U.S. and China say they want the same thing for Afghanistan — a stable, inclusive government. “The difference is in how to achieve that,” Zhou said. “The Chinese approach is that this is reality: The Taliban are in power. Let’s just get in touch, and hope through this process they can become inclusive and open.”

Signs of growing economic ties abound in the last six months.

In April, China spearheaded the Tunxi Initiative, which corralled Afghanistan’s neighbors and Russia to support reconstruction and economic assistance in the war-torn country. Over the summer, it removed tariffs on 98% of imported Afghan goods. Last month, it restarted an air transport service delivering pine nuts — a key Afghan export — to China, which brings \$800 million a year into Kabul’s coffers.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the group wanted to move ahead with China’s Belt and Road Initiative, calling it “a great opportunity” and saying that now that there is “good security, it is time [we start major economic projects](#).”

These days, it’s not uncommon in Kabul to see stern-faced Chinese bodyguards escorting visitors to various Afghan ministries, or Taliban provincial and central leaders meeting representatives of Chinese state-owned companies at the recently reopened Afghan Embassy in Beijing. The Chinese Embassy in Kabul is one of a few diplomatic missions still operating, although China has not officially recognized the Taliban government.

“I’m dealing with Chinese investors not every week, but every day,” said Jawad, an Afghan Ministry of Commerce official who gave only his first name because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Chinese officials pointedly trumpet Beijing’s humanitarian aid on social media, contrasting Chinese military planes in Afghanistan that “carry hope” with American planes that “take life” — even though U.S. humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, totaling \$1.1 billion over the last year, [dwarfs the amount China gives](#). Other countries also donate more.

The newest addition to the Afghan capital’s hotels is the Kabul Longan, now under Chinese ownership; customers settle bills and buy Chinese foodstuffs from a ground-floor grocery store using Chinese payment systems such as WeChat or AliPay, as Western credit card and other cashless payments are suspended in Afghanistan.

Then there is Yu. Standing on a rock-strewn plot of land at the foot of a mountain eight miles northeast of Kabul, not far from where herders chivvied their sheep, he waxed enthusiastic about the prospects of the new Chinatown Industrial Park, which he launched six months ago.

“Before, the market was strong, but it wasn’t safe. Now, security is 90% better, but the market is down 50%,” he said, adding that the project was first signed with the [U.S.-backed government in Kabul](#), then renewed with the Taliban. If all goes to plan, in two years there should be more than 13,000 workers employed here.

More than 100 Chinese entrepreneurs have already signed up, said Yu, who proudly points to a framed picture on his wall showing him with Taliban officials at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Now he was rejecting applications, he added.

Yet for all the fanfare and the friendly visits and discussions, including Chinese overtures to the Taliban to gain mining concessions and make infrastructure investments, observers note that few concrete deals have materialized.

“I still haven’t seen any signatures on major projects, whether it’s roads or electricity transmission lines, and if these aren’t implemented, any talk on mining and renewable energy is just that — talk,” said Niva Yau, a Central Asia expert based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

That reflects the caution with which Beijing still approaches the Taliban, said Andrew Small, a China expert at the German Marshall Fund.

“None of this so far is super risky, major state projects of the sort embroiled in deep political risk assessments about where it will go in the coming years,” Small said. He noted that in the eastern province of Logar, [a copper mine concession](#) won by the state-owned China Metallurgical Group Corp. in 2007 remains undeveloped, despite Chinese officials announcing they had restarted discussions with the Taliban.

“They will make statements with rather small amounts of humanitarian aid and relatively modest activities, such as pine nuts,” Small said of the Chinese government. “All of them are useful, but it’s not on the scale that is backfilling for U.S. and Western assistance in terms of what it can actually do for the economy.”

Yu, unsurprisingly, is more bullish, even evangelical, about Chinese-Afghan trade. He first came to Afghanistan in 2002, defying a consensus among friends and family that he was “crazy” to do so. He claims to be the first Chinese trader to bring lapis lazuli to Beijing, the semiprecious blue gemstone for which Afghanistan is famous. His investments include factories for metal wire production, color paints, PVC piping, textiles and a stainless steel plant that still brings in \$30,000 of profit a day, he says.

“I’m not like other foreigners who stay for one or two years, then leave. I felt I needed to be here,” he said.

When the Taliban seized Kabul last year, he closed Chinatown but didn’t leave the country. The militant group’s representatives came to visit and assigned guards to protect the premises; Yu felt safe enough to reopen a week later.

That can-do attitude was one of the reasons why Afghan businessman Abdul Qaher Faqiri partnered with him.

“I tried to invest with Americans, but they won’t do it. I could offer it for free,” Faqiri said, gesturing with a sweep of his hand at the desolate landscape around him, “and they still wouldn’t, whether now or before the republic’s fall. Chinese are the kind of people who stay the night here. Americans would never do that.”

Yu believes in the potential for business to help stabilize Afghanistan after decades of conflict.

“We’re coming here to invest. When there are factories, people will work, have salaries, feed their families,” he said. “And when you can do that, you’ll never go to war.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 US doubles reward top al-Shabab leaders
SOURCE	https://themedialine.org/mideast-daily-news/us-doubles-reward-for-information-on-top-al-shabab-leadership/

GIST	<p>The United States on Monday said that it was increasing its reward for information leading to the arrest of three key leaders of Somalia's al-Shabab jihadist group to \$10 million apiece, following a spate of deadly attacks.</p> <p>The three include the group's top two leaders – Ahmed Diriye and Mahad Karate – and a US citizen who has been part of the group for the past 14 years, Jihad Mostafa. Mostafa, a former resident of San Diego, California, functions as an intermediary between al-Shabab and other terrorist organizations. They are accused of having key roles in planning several deadly terrorist attacks in Somalia and Kenya.</p> <p>The US State Department also said it was for the first time offering a reward of up to \$10 million for information “leading to the disruption of the financial mechanisms” of the al-Qaida affiliate. Reward claimants would also be offered the possibility of relocation for their own safety.</p> <p>Marc Dillard, deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Kenya, said the reward covers “information leading to the identification and disruption of al-Shabab's revenue sources and funding streams. This includes information on al-Shabab's exploitation of local natural resources, financial donors and facilitators, and financial transactions.”</p> <p>US Ambassador to Somalia Larry Andre on Monday said the \$10 million reward – doubled from the previous offer – will complement the Somali government's effort to defeat the terrorist group.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 ISWAP claims Red Cross attack Nigeria
SOURCE	https://saharareporters.com/2022/11/16/breaking-iswap-says-it-attacked-red-cross-office-borno-burnt-over-20-vehicles-took
GIST	<p>As part of the statement, the terror group also posted pictures of its attack on the Red Cross compound.</p> <p>The Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) militant has reportedly attacked the compound of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Mongunu, Borno state.</p> <p>Borno is in northeastern Nigeria and is the epicentre of insurgency in the country.</p> <p>In a statement sighted by SaharaReporters on Wednesday, the terrorist group said it burnt over 20 official vehicles of the Red Cross and reportedly drove some away after the attack that took place last Thursday.</p> <p>As part of the statement, the terror group also posted pictures of its attack on the Red Cross compound.</p> <p>The attack it was gathered happened at about 1 am last Thursday.</p> <p>In October 2018, the terror jihadists, a faction of Boko Haram, executed Hauwa Leman, an aid worker with the ICRC.</p> <p>In September 2018, the insurgent group killed Saifura Ahmed, one of the three humanitarian workers abducted in Rann, Kala Balge local government area of Borno state.</p> <p>Leman, a 24-year-old midwife and student of health education at the University of Maiduguri, was in the group that was abducted.</p> <p>ISWAP, in a short statement, then said: “We have kept our word exactly as we said, by killing another humanitarian worker, Hauwa Leman, who is working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that were abducted during a raid on a military facility in Rann, Kala Balge in March 2018.</p> <p>“Saifura and Hauwa were killed because they are considered as Murtads (apostates) by the group because they were once Muslims that have abandoned their Islam, the moment they chose to work with the Red Cross, and for us, there is no difference between Red Cross and UNICEF.</p>

	<p>“If we see them, we will kill the apostates among them, men or women, and chose to kill or keep the infidels as slaves, men or women.”</p> <p>ISWAP is primarily active in the Chad Basin and fights an extensive insurgency against the states of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Nigeria army kills notorious terrorist?
SOURCE	https://saharareporters.com/2022/11/16/nigerian-army-kills-notorious-terrorist-kachalla-gudau-and-his-trusted-lieutenant-kaduna
GIST	<p>Gudau was killed by troops on Sunday at a place called Kankomi in Kaduna.</p> <p>Kachalla Gudau, leader of a gang of bandits notorious for killing and abductions, has been killed by the Nigerian Army.</p> <p>The terrorist is allegedly responsible for many kidnappings and killings in the Chikun, Kachia, and Kajuru local government areas of Kaduna State.</p> <p>According to the state government, Gudau was killed by troops on Sunday at a place called Kankomi in Kaduna.</p> <p>Samuel Aruwan, the state internal security and home affairs in commissioner, said Gudau was killed during a gun battle with soldiers.</p> <p>He said, “The remains of the notorious bandit – who is said to have links with other notorious kingpins across the North-West and North-Central states – were retrieved in the Kankomi Forest where he bled to death.</p> <p>“Credible sources reported that after his remains were retrieved, a large number of bandits under his command buried him in a location said to be around Kaku Forest situated in Kaso general area of Chikun LGA.</p> <p>“The identity of another of the neutralised bandits whose remains were found by the troops, has been confirmed as ‘Rigimamme’ one of Gudau’s trusted criminal aides.</p> <p>“Gudau played leading roles in the joint kidnappings of students and expatriates in Kajuru, Chikun and Kachia councils, aside from the murder of kidnapped citizens and victims who resisted abduction.</p> <p>"Added to these nefarious activities, Gudau was engaged in coordinated attacks on herder settlements, disposing them of livestock, which made him the illegal possessor of large herds of cattle. These he regularly traded for amounts running into millions of naira. He also made deals for illicit drugs and acquisition of sophisticated arms and ammunition.</p> <p>“The high point of his cattle rustling spree came in the first and second quarters of 2022, where in Kajuru LGA alone, Gudau and his partners rustled 1,600 and 3, 332 cattle respectively, a total of 4,932 cows stolen in the first six months of 2022.</p> <p>“With the ongoing aggressive kinetic operations, Gudau’s cattle rustling – in Kajuru LGA particularly – began to wane, as 132 cattle were rustled in the third quarter of 2022 (the period spanning July, August and September).</p> <p>“The heat of the kinetic operations which denied his bandits freedom of action may have prompted the attack on the military base in Kankomi, where he met his waterloo.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Report: growing threat domestic extremists
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/fbi-dhs-meta-tiktok-threat-domestic-extremists-rcna57458
GIST	<p>An investigation by the Senate Homeland Security Committee alleges that the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and leading social media companies are not adequately addressing the growing threat of domestic terrorism, especially white supremacist and anti-government extremists.</p> <p>In a 128-page report obtained by NBC News, the committee’s majority Democrats say federal law enforcement agencies have not appropriately allocated resources to match the metastasizing threat, and have failed to systematically track and report data on domestic terrorism incidents, as required by federal law.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, our counterterrorism agencies have not effectively tracked the data that you need to measure this threat,” Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., who chairs the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said Wednesday. “If they’re not tracking it, it’s likely they are not prioritizing our counterterrorism resources to effectively counter this threat.”</p> <p>In a statement, the FBI said it is “agile” and adjusts resources to meet the latest threats, while DHS said that “addressing domestic violent extremism is a top priority” for the department.</p> <p>A Meta spokesperson pointed to the company’s most recent Community Standards Enforcement Report, which highlights what the spokesperson described as a low prevalence of terror and organized hate content on Facebook and Instagram. A top executive, Nick Clegg, said last year, “The reality is, it’s not in Facebook’s interest — financially or reputationally — to continually turn up the temperature and push users towards ever more extreme content.”</p> <p>A TikTok spokesperson said in a statement, “We believe that maintaining a safe and trusted platform is critical to our long-term success, which is why we are dedicated to identifying and removing content that incites or glorifies violence or promotes violent extremist organizations.”</p> <p>A YouTube spokeswoman said the platform is acting to block extremist content. Twitter did not immediately provide comment in response to a request.</p> <p>The report found that the FBI and DHS continue to spend more on international terrorism, despite saying for years that domestic terrorism now poses a greater threat to Americans.</p> <p>The investigation also found that social media companies “have failed to meaningfully address the growing presence of extremism on their platforms,” and that the business models of four leading social media outlets — Meta, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube — are based on maximizing user engagement, growth, and profits, which incentivizes increasingly extreme content.</p> <p>“These companies point to the voluminous amount of violative content they remove from their platforms, but the investigation found that their own recommendations algorithms and other features and products play in the proliferation of that content in the first place,” the report said. “Absent new incentives or regulation, extremist content will continue to proliferate on these platforms and companies’ content moderation efforts will continue to be inadequate to stop its spread.”</p> <p>The report’s analysis of the FBI and DHS response to domestic terrorism appears to have been hampered by a lack of data. For example, the committee said neither agency provided complete information on how many employees and how much money were devoted to combating domestic terrorism, despite a 2020 law requiring them to do so.</p> <p>Although experts say the threat from domestic violent extremists has been building for years, the committee found that arrests and federal charges in domestic terrorism cases involving the FBI had been</p>

steadily declining before [the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol](#). Arrests and charges in domestic extremism cases have since spiked, but the bulk of them are related to the Capitol riot investigation.

The report suggests that despite prioritizing domestic violent extremism in recent years, the FBI appears quicker to call an attack terrorism when it was carried out in the name of jihadist ideology than white supremacist beliefs.

Both DHS and FBI define “homegrown violent extremists” as terrorists inspired by foreign ideologies.

The report points out that the people accused of killing 23 people in El Paso, Texas, and 10 people in Buffalo, New York, were not given that designation though they reportedly claimed inspiration from the international terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, among other racist and antisemitic ideologies.

At the same time, the FBI categorized a Muslim man who killed U.S. military personnel in a July 2015 mass shooting that killed four U.S. Marines and a Navy sailor in Tennessee as a homegrown violent extremist, “despite not having information on which international terrorist organization supposedly inspired the attack,” the report said.

The report said a change in how the FBI categorizes domestic terrorism ideologies has been a hindrance to understanding the problem. In 2017, FBI created a new category of domestic terrorism ideology called “Black Identity Extremists,” but then stopped using it. By 2019, the FBI combined all forms of racially motivated extremism, including the pre-existing category of “White Supremacist Violence,” into one category called “Racially Motivated Violent Extremists.”

“This change obscures the full scope of white supremacist terrorist attacks, and it has prevented the federal government from accurately measuring domestic terrorism threats,” the report said.

The report also criticized the FBI and DHS as having been conservative in hunting for threat intelligence posted publicly on social media. The FBI has said that a torrent of threat information leading up to the Jan. 6 attack was not specific enough to have prompted action.

“Agencies have been slow to adapt to the open planning of extremist violence online, leading to incomplete threat assessments,” the report said.

Peters added in a phone call with reporters: “The FBI and DHS must do a better job” monitoring threat information on social media. Before the Jan. 6 attack, he said, “There was a lot of open-source material that was out there indicating that people were planning to come to the Capitol and engage in violent acts. ... These agencies have to be quicker on their feet.”

The report said the FBI uses a company called ZeroFox that identifies potentially concerning posts from social media platforms based on specific search terms identified and approved by the bureau. After identifying these posts, ZeroFox generates automatic alerts for FBI to investigate further. Each field office decides whether and how to use the data, the report said, and as a result, the data is not used consistently by FBI agents across the country.

DHS, meanwhile, “has failed to effectively utilize” its legal authority to monitor public social media. The report noted that the DHS inspector general found that DHS’s intelligence office “identified specific threat information related to the events on January 6, 2021, but did not issue any intelligence products about these threats until January 8, 2021,” despite communicating internally about security concerns.

In a statement, DHS said it “engages in a community-based approach to prevent terrorism and targeted violence, and does so in ways that protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, and that adhere to all applicable laws. To that end, DHS regularly shares information regarding the heightened threat

environment with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial officials to ensure the safety and security of all communities across the country.”

The report is unsparing in its criticism of major social media platforms, which it says are a hotbed of extremist content.

It cited a study by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, which found that in 2016, use of social media played a role in the radicalization processes of nearly 90% of U.S. extremist plots and activities. The study found that social media “has become an increasingly important tool for extremists to disseminate content, share ideas, and facilitate relationships.”

The committee requested information from Meta, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube, which it said have a combined footprint that reaches nearly 75% of Americans and several billion people worldwide.

The bottom line, the report found: “Although Meta, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube have a range of policies aimed at addressing extremist and hateful content on their platforms ... extreme content is still prevalent across these platforms.”

The report added:

- Meta has been aware of the harm that its products cause for years. Internal documents provided by a Meta whistleblower show that the platform’s recommendation features are designed to provide users with content they are most likely to engage with, and therefore often drive the spread of harmful content, according to internal Meta research and external researchers. Yet Meta has chosen in some instances to not make changes to its features and products that would alter what content is prioritized for viewers, instead focusing on taking down content that violates its rules, often after it has spread.
- TikTok recommends videos based on user engagement, in particular the amount of time spent consuming individual pieces of content. Research says TikTok’s algorithm pushes users toward more extreme content. In an interview with committee staff, TikTok’s chief operating officer said she did not believe the company had conducted research into whether the company’s algorithms promote extreme content.
- Twitter generates a list of accounts it recommends users follow based on the user’s engagement with similar accounts and topics, creating a “rabbit hole” effect that can promote conspiracy theories and extreme content. Twitter was central to the spread of QAnon conspiracy theories and the “pizzagate” conspiracy that falsely alleged that public officials were linked to a human trafficking and child sex ring out of a pizzeria in Washington, D.C. The Taliban and white supremacists used Twitter’s Spaces feature to spread extremist content to hundreds of users.
- Over 70% of viewing time on YouTube is generated by the platform’s recommendation system, which is based on users’ engagement on the platform and activity on Google. Research conducted by MIT’s Technology Review found that “users consistently migrate from milder to more extreme content” on YouTube. In an interview with committee staff, YouTube’s chief product officer could not point to internal research done to evaluate whether the platform recommends extreme content.

YouTube spokeswoman Ivy Choi said in an email: “Responsibility is our top priority and informs every product and policy decision we make. We have established policies against hate speech, harmful conspiracies and violent extremism, and in Q2 2022, only 9 to 11 views out of every 10,000 came from violative content. Additionally, our recommendation system surfaces authoritative content in search results and the Watch Next panel, including for search queries related to violent extremism. While study in this area continues, a number of researchers have found that our recommendations aren’t steering viewers towards extreme content.”

The report’s policy recommendation to address these issues is vague.

	“Congress and regulators should create accountability mechanisms for social media companies to prioritize safety in the development of their products and features,” the report said, adding that lawmakers should “consider removing current protections in law that allow companies, without meaningful consequences, to continue to prioritize engagement on their platforms even if that results in knowingly promoting extreme content.”
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HEADLINE	11/16 Somalia fights back attack on education
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-fights-back-against-al-shabab-attack-on-education-sector-/6837584.html
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, SOMALIA — The Somali government said it plans to reopen schools in territories recently recovered from militant group al-Shabab.</p> <p>Education Minister Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir says his ministry has a plan to take education to the areas seized by the government and local forces.</p> <p>Somali security forces supported by local clan militias have been dislodging al-Shabab from towns and villages in central Somalia since August.</p> <p>“The Somali people have risen up in support of their government, a sizable land has been liberated; we are going to reopen the schools, we are going to take the curriculum there, and we are going to send teachers there,” Abdulkadir said in an interview with VOA Somali. “The government will utilize all of its power to provide education service to the people who have not had regular or proper education for a long time.”</p> <p>He said the government already sent school supplies to Hirshabelle State, which was a focal point for the offensive against the militants.</p> <p>Abdulkadir said only 24% of Somalis currently have opportunity to access education.</p> <p>“They [al-Shabab] have taken advantage of this lack of knowledge and ignorance, and God willing; we are going to put a lot of effort into that to change,” he said.</p> <p>The minister’s pledge to revive education in areas captured from al-Shabab is not a coincidence. It comes nearly three weeks after two consecutive al-Shabab bombs targeted the Ministry of Education in Mogadishu, killing 121 people and injuring more than 330 others.</p> <p>On the day of the attack, the Ministry was issuing high school certificates to some of the 35,000 secondary students who took the national exam.</p> <p>After the explosions, a senior al-Shabab official, Mahad Karate, who had his bounty increased by the U.S. on Monday to \$10 million, launched a stinging verbal attack on the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>“Some people are asking themselves why the Ministry of Education was attacked, we say this ministry was the center for dozens of projects intended to undermine Islam,” he said in an audio published by al-Shabab media. “It’s used by the enemy for the psychological warfare against the Somali Muslims; it’s fighting Islamic curriculums and is used for spreading misguided curriculums brought in by the infidels.”</p> <p>Karate, whose real name is Mahad Warsame Qaley, also accused the Ministry of Education of helping to recruit Somali students into the national army.</p> <p>Al-Shabab has targeted education institutions and students for years. In a suicide bombing at a graduation ceremony on December 3, 2009, a bomber killed 26 people including graduates, teachers and four government ministers. On October 4, 2011, al-Shabab detonated a suicide truck bomb as hundreds of students lined up seeking scholarships from Turkey, killing more than 100 people, most of them students.</p>

In addition, the group has warned students and schools not to take part in government-sponsored exams. In October 2018, al-Shabaab spokesman Ali Dhere told private schools to “beware” of having relationships with the federal government.

Al-Shabab has also been trying to influence the curriculum, going so far as to introduce its own curriculum for primary schools in April 2017 and middle schools in June 2021.

The group has run its own schools to teach the curriculum in areas it controls.

“Conditions for admission is there should be at least 70 students in each institution, between 13 and 25 years of age, unmarried. Clans pay institution expenses; al-Shabab provides the teachers,” said former Al-Shabab education official Ibrahim Nadara.

He said at the end of two-year education period, the top 10 students are entered into a special institute for higher education; the remaining 90 are taken straight into al-Shabab training camps.

Nadara said al-Shabab recruits hundreds of fighters from these institutions.

“It’s the only never-ending recruitment factory,” he said.

Abdulkadir said the threats from al-Shabab “fell on deaf ears” as the government went ahead in developing its own curriculum. In 2018, it completed the primary and middle school curriculum, and in 2020 succeeded in completing the same for high schoolers.

He dismissed al-Shabab claims of foreign involvement in the government curriculum and criticized al-Shabab's curriculum, which he said instructs children to carry out killings and explosions.

“It’s teaching people savagery,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Turkey detains suspect in Istanbul bombing
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-detains-suspect-linked-istanbul-bombing-syria-93461043
GIST	<p>ANKARA, Turkey -- Turkish security forces have detained a suspect wanted in connection with the deadly bombing in Istanbul in an operation in a Turkish-controlled area in northwestern Syria, Turkey’s state-run news agency reported.</p> <p>Other suspects detained following the bombing will appear before court officials on Thursday to face possible charges or be released from custody.</p> <p>The suspect, identified by his code-name “Husam” was apprehended by Turkish police late Wednesday in the Syrian city of Azaz, which is currently under the control of the Turkey-backed Syrian opposition, the Anadolu Agency reported. He was being taken to Istanbul for questioning.</p> <p>His detention raised the number of suspects under custody in connection with the bombing to 51.</p> <p>Sunday’s explosion targeted Istanbul’s bustling Istiklal Avenue — a popular thoroughfare lined with shops and restaurants — and left six people dead, including two children. Seven dozen others were wounded in the attack that came as a stark reminder of bombings in Turkish cities between 2015 and 2017, crushing the public’s sense of security.</p> <p>Turkish authorities blamed the attack on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, as well as Syrian Kurdish groups affiliated with it. The Kurdish militants groups have, however, denied involvement.</p>

Anadolu said “Husam” is suspected of aiding and abetting a Syrian woman who is accused of leaving a TNT-laden bomb at Istiklal. Police said the woman, identified as Ahlam Albashir, had crossed into Turkey from Syria illegally and has admitted to carrying out the attack.

Albashir and 49 others were taken to a courthouse in Istanbul on Thursday for questioning by court officials following routine medical checks, Anadolu said.

The PKK has fought an armed insurgency in Turkey since 1984. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since then.

Ankara and Washington both consider the PKK a terror group, but disagree on the status of the Syrian Kurdish groups, which have been allied with the U.S. in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/17 Dangerous, recalled toys still on sale
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/17/business/dangerous-toys-pirg-2022/index.html
GIST	<p>Parents shopping for their kids this holiday season need to be alert and carefully examine toys before they buy them because recalled and counterfeit toys are being sold online, a consumer report said Thursday.</p> <p>The 37th annual “Trouble in Toyland” toy safety report by Washington-based US Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) warned parents to be especially mindful of this hidden danger.</p> <p>PIRG said that in October it was able to buy more than 30 recalled toys from several US-based online sellers, noting that it is illegal for retailers and online marketplaces to sell toys that have been recalled.</p> <p>The report also said counterfeit toys that don’t necessarily meet mandatory US safety standards continue to be sold in stores and online.</p> <p>The group was able to buy close to a dozen different types of toys that had been recalled — for reasons that ranged from choking hazards to laceration risk to potential poisoning — from sellers on Facebook Marketplace and eBay, as well as several online toy shops.</p> <p>The toys included stuffed animals, action figures, activity balls for infants, musical toys, bath toys and a toddler’s riding toy, and a majority of them were bought new in the original packaging or new with tags.</p> <p>“None of the other sellers flagged, stopped or sent a warning about any of our other purchases of recalled toys,” the report said.</p> <p>The recalled toys that PIRG said it was able to purchase online included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– DigitDots 3mm and 5mm Magnetic Balls from HD Premier: These were recalled in March 2022 for injury to the digestive system if two or more magnets are swallowed.– Kidoozie Play Tents and Playhouses by Epoch Everlasting Play: These were recalled in July 2022 because the fabric playhouses and play tents fail to meet industry flammability standards.– Forky 11” Plush Toys from Pixar’s Toy Story: The toy was recalled in July 2019 because the googly plastic eyes on the toy can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children.– Early Learning Centre Little Senses Lights & Sounds Shape Sorter Toys from Addo Play: The toy set was recalled in October 2022 because the red cube can come apart and release a small white ball, posing a choking hazard.

– **6-inch Aflac plush promotional ducks from Communicorp:** The plush ducks were recalled in June 2022 because components contain excessive levels of toxic phthalates, which are dangerous because they can negatively impact brain and physical development in young children. The recall covered a variety of the plush duck characters, including Accident Duck, Business Duck, Fishing Duck, Police Duck, PGA Duck, One Day Pay Duck, Heisman Duck and Lifeguard Duck.

– **Blue’s Clues Foot to Floor Ride-on Toys from Huffy Corp:** The toy was recalled in August 2022 because the ride-on toy can tip forward when a young child is riding it, posing fall and injury hazards.

When the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and a toy manufacturer announce a recall, that means the toy must immediately be removed from store shelves and online marketplaces. Federal law prohibits the sale of products subject to a recall ordered by the CPSC or a voluntary recall by the company in consultation by the CPSC, the report said.

PIRG offered this advice regarding the best way to avoid counterfeit toys: If the only place to buy a popular, hard-to-find toy is a website you’ve never heard of or that looks sketchy, there may be a reason for that.

The toys may not be genuine, the report said, and may not meet safety standards for parts that can break or levels of toxins, which are common in plastic toys.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Climate change link to West African floods
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/climate/climate-change-floods-west-africa.html
GIST	<p>Heavy rains that led to recent deadly floods in Nigeria and neighboring countries were made about 80 times more likely by human caused climate change, scientists said Wednesday.</p> <p>The floods, which killed more than 600 people in Nigeria and more than 200 in Niger and Chad, were the consequence of an extremely wet rainy season. The scientists, from a loose-knit coalition called World Weather Attribution, also said climate change had made the season, which runs from April to October, 20 percent wetter overall than it would have been in a world without warming.</p> <p>The findings come as negotiators are meeting in Egypt at the U.N. climate summit, with the issue of “loss and damage” — whether industrialized countries should pay less-developed nations for the effects of climate change — high on the agenda. Nigeria and many other African countries produce relatively little carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to warming yet increasingly suffer from climate-related disasters like floods and heat waves.</p> <p>“This is a real and present problem, and it’s particularly the poorest countries that are being hit very hard,” ” said one of the researchers, Maarten van Aalst, director of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Center.</p> <p>“It’s not up to us as scientists to tell negotiators what to do,” said Dr. van Aalst, who is attending the climate talks, known as COP27. But this study and others show that climate disasters “are not something for the future, they’re happening today,” he said. “So we do need those solutions on loss and damage and we need particularly to deliver in those countries where that vulnerability is highest.”</p> <p>The analysis looked at two aspects of the seasonal rains in the region this year: average rainfall for the entire season over a large drainage area, mostly in Chad, and spikes of extreme rainfall over weeklong periods in another drainage area, mostly in Nigeria.</p> <p>Like similar studies by this and other groups, the researchers used observational data as well as climate models that simulate both the current world, where emissions of greenhouse gases since the 19th century have raised temperatures by about 1.1 degree Celsius, or 2 degrees Fahrenheit, and a hypothetical world</p>

where no emissions, and thus no warming, occurred. This study has yet to be peer-reviewed and published in a journal, but the techniques used have been peer-reviewed many times before.

Comparing results from the two models, the researchers were able to determine the influence of climate change on the rains. That influence appeared to be greater on the overall season, where climate change made such a high average rainfall 80 times more likely. Climate change made the heavy short-duration rains only twice as likely, the researchers found.

Floods are not uncommon in the rainy season in West Africa, but these were the worst in decades in Nigeria and some of the other countries. Nearly 1.5 million Nigerians were displaced, vast stretches of farmland were inundated, and fuel and food distribution were disrupted.

The researchers said there were other factors that contributed to the disaster, including poverty, military conflicts and land-use changes, especially the increasing settlement of flood plains by growing populations. In Nigeria, the flooding was also made worse by poor water management, specifically uncoordinated releases of water from a large dam in neighboring Cameroon.

But the influence of climate change was clear, said Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. Such an extreme rainy season would have been very rare in a world without climate change, she said, but now it has about a 10 percent chance of occurring in any given year.

And with the planet continuing to warm, “that also means that going forward we will see more of these very intense, rainy seasons in the region,” Dr. Otto said.

The attribution group released a second analysis Wednesday, of the erratic and weak 2021 rainy season farther north in the Sahel, the semiarid region that borders the Sahara. The lack of rain affected harvests and worsened food shortages in Niger, Burkina Faso and elsewhere.

Subsistence agriculture in the Sahel is heavily dependent on seasonal rainfall, which can vary greatly in amount and timing from year to year. The rainy season in 2021 started later than usual, was shorter and included some dry periods, which stunted the development of millet and other cereal crops.

But the researchers were unable to determine whether climate change influenced the drier than normal conditions because of a lack of reliable weather data, a common problem in some less-developed countries.

The study “confirms the importance of investing in and maintaining a network of weather stations and rain gauges within Sahel countries,” said one of the researchers, Audrey Brouillet, of the Institute of Research for Development in France. “This is key to understanding the influence of climate change on droughts and other events in the region.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 Five unusual Covid symptoms
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/unusual-covid-symptoms.html
GIST	<p>By this point in the long slog of the pandemic, many people know the telltale symptoms of a Covid-19 infection: a ragged ache in your throat, a pernicious cough, congestion, fever and full-body exhaustion. But a tiny subset of people also develop less common symptoms, ones that can sound like hexes from a children’s story: hairy tongues, purple toes, welts that sprout on their faces.</p> <p>“Every infectious disease has common and uncommon manifestations,” said Dr. Mark Mulligan, an infectious disease specialist at NYU Langone Health. And as we learn more about the coronavirus, he said, we may better understand the underlying causes behind these infrequent symptoms — but until then, it’s largely guesswork.</p>

Confounding symptoms have been a component of Covid since the start of the pandemic — the [loss of taste and smell](#) has become a disturbing sign of the disease. Covid also has the potential to [disrupt menstrual cycles](#), a side effect some women also reported after vaccination.

A [study of over 60,000](#) people who tested positive for Covid and reported their symptoms found that a small percentage experienced ringing in their ears, sore eyes, rashes, red welts on their faces or lips, hair loss and unusual joint pains. A larger analysis of [more than 600,000](#) people in Britain showed that a fraction of those with Covid also developed purple sores and blisters on their feet and numbness across their bodies, among other maladies.

Doctors aren't sure why only some people develop these unusual symptoms. Genetics might play a role, Dr. Mulligan said; vaccination status could also have something to do with it, as an unvaccinated person might have a more severe infection, which could generate a different course of symptoms. Scientists have also found that the coronavirus can enter the bloodstream in a minority of people, he said, which means that it's possible that the virus could enter various organs across the body and cause symptoms beyond the respiratory system.

[Antiviral treatments](#) like Paxlovid may potentially alleviate symptoms like a Covid-related rash, perhaps because they can reduce the amount of virus in your blood, said Dr. Kelly Gebo, an infectious disease specialist at Johns Hopkins Medicine. But it's unclear whether these symptoms are directly caused by the virus, or by the body's response to it.

Inflammation could also be a culprit, said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an infectious disease specialist at the University of California, San Francisco. If the virus gets into the bloodstream and impacts multiple parts of the body, immune cells flock to those areas, Dr. Chin-Hong said. That means an ear, for example, which the virus would typically not impact, may become inflamed, not function as well and potentially ache.

Covid also leaves patients in a weakened state, he said, which means pathogens lingering around their bodies from previous infections — like herpes or the [virus that causes shingles](#) — can reactivate, causing rashes or cold sores in the wake of Covid.

A third theory is that the stress that can come with a Covid infection — the anxiety of quarantine, the loss of income, the fear of long-term health implications — can also trigger symptoms like [hair loss](#) and hives, Dr. Chin-Hong said.

Each of these symptoms, when associated with Covid, typically resolves in a matter of weeks, often without treatment, he added. And there aren't set rules for how doctors treat them, said Dr. Gebo. "We have definitive guidelines on how to treat shortness of breath," she said, "but we don't have definitive guidelines on these."

Here's what else we know about the causes of — and potential treatments for — some of these symptoms.

Hairy tongue

Healthy tongue cells rapidly replace themselves, Dr. Chin-Hong said, but if older cells linger and build on top of one another, it forms a dark, thick, fuzzy overgrowth, often called hairy tongue. Even before Covid, doctors saw patients with hairy tongue related to viral infections, smoking, antibiotic use and poor hygiene, he said, adding, "It's more common than people think."

"I know it looks really scary to people," he said, but the affliction is generally temporary. Some people may also feel a burning sensation inside their mouths. Those with this symptom shouldn't be "freaked out," Dr. Chin-Hong said. People with hairy tongue can use a tongue scraper or toothbrush to scratch away those tongue cells, and they can make sure to practice good oral hygiene to prevent additional buildup.

In rare cases, people with Covid may also develop thrush, otherwise known as oral candidiasis, which occurs when a fungus infects your mouth. It [has been](#) linked to a suppressed immune system or the use of antibiotics, Dr. Chin-Hong said. Doctors typically diagnose thrush by examining the white lesions that can sprout on your cheek, tongue or mouth; the treatment is usually 10 to 14 days of an antifungal medication.

Tingling nerves

When people develop the sensation of pins and needles on their skin, it may be because their nerves are inflamed by immune cells as they fight off infection, Dr. Chin-Hong said. It's also possible that the virus itself could damage peripheral nerves, like those that go to your hands and feet, Dr. Gebo said; this also occurs with the shingles infection.

"What we don't know is what's a direct impact of the virus itself, or what's inflammation," she said. "These are things we're trying to figure out."

Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis found that people who tested positive for Covid were roughly [three times](#) as likely to report pain, tingling and numbness in their hands and feet than those with negative tests.

For many people, that tingling sensation goes away in a matter of days, Dr. Gebo said. If patients are in pain, she added, they should consult their doctors, who may recommend taking Tylenol or Motrin. People with persistent nerve pain, even after they recover from the virus, should consult their doctors, said Dr. Marc Sala, co-director of the Northwestern Medicine Comprehensive Covid-19 Center.

Rashes

It's well-established that viruses can induce rashes, Dr. Sala said, and he noted that he has seen a wide variety of skin afflictions in patients with Covid. The American Academy of Dermatology Association cites itchy bumps, chickenpox-like blisters, rashes that form lacy patterns on the skin and raised bumps as potential skin conditions linked to Covid. If you develop a rash that lingers after you recover from Covid, Dr. Sala recommends consulting a dermatologist.

Hair loss

Any type of physical or emotional distress can [cause your hair to fall out](#), said Dr. Shilpi Khetarpal, a dermatologist at Cleveland Clinic. It's not totally clear whether an infection with Covid itself, or the stress related to it, leads some people to experience hair loss, she said. If you find yourself among those who lose some hair during or after a Covid infection, don't panic, she said, adding: "It's not scarring — it comes back. It just needs time."

Covid toe

Scientists are still conflicted about what causes "Covid toe," the frostbite-like rash and blisters that form on some people's feet and fingers after they become infected, causing toes and the tips of fingers to become swollen and purple. One theory is that people with Covid may experience microvascular clots, which occur in the smallest blood vessels in your body and block the blood supply, causing that discoloration, Dr. Sala said.

Patients who develop Covid toe usually do so during the acute phase of an infection, he added, and the symptoms tend to resolve soon after. The American Academy of Dermatology Association recommends using a [hydrocortisone cream](#) to treat it. Like most rare Covid symptoms, as unnerving as it might be, the swelling typically resolves on its own — for reasons doctors aren't entirely sure of.

"We're still learning about Covid," Dr. Mulligan said. "We don't understand everything."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Climate change threatens trees in cities
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/As-climate-change-progresses-trees-in-cities-17588378.php

SEATTLE (AP) — As the driest summer in Seattle’s record books ended, trees across the city were sounding silent alarms.

It was the latest in a string of Seattle summers in the last decade, including a record-breaking heat dome in 2021, to feature drier conditions and hotter temperatures that have left many trees with premature brown leaves and needles, bald branches and excessive seeding — all signs of stress.

“You see it in big leaf maples and hemlocks, just loaded with cones or seeds, it’s kind of their last-ditch effort to reproduce,” said Shea Cope, an arborist at Washington Park Arboretum, a sprawling 230-acre (93 hectare) park north of downtown.

This summer was fatal for three “significant” trees in the park’s pine collection, including an 85-year-old Japanese red pine infected with fungus left by beetles.

“We’re losing conifers faster than our broad leaf, deciduous ones,” Cope added as he surveyed a towering knobcone pine with half its canopy dead.

Cities worldwide have promised to plant more carbon-absorbing trees to help fight climate change. Research has shown the shade of mature trees also helps reduce unhealthy “heat islands,” especially in poor neighborhoods. President Joe Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act infused \$1.5 billion into the Forest Service’s urban tree program — money for cities to do even more planting and maintenance.

CLIMATE THREAT TO URBAN FORESTS

Life in a city can be especially hard for a tree, and those challenges are escalating with global warming.

Researchers from France and Australia analyzed the impact of hotter temperatures and less rain on more than 3,100 tree and shrub species in 164 cities across 78 countries. They found about half the trees already were experiencing climate conditions beyond their limits. They also concluded that by 2050 nearly all tree species planted in Australian cities will not be able to survive in urban areas.

“If trends hold, we are going to have a lot of trees die,” said Nicholas Johnson, an arborist for Seattle City Parks. “Under heat, trees get weak — just like people.”

Heat and drought force trees to spend energy surviving that would otherwise go to regeneration, growth or fighting off disease and pests, Johnson said. “Everything outside is trying to eat a tree. The stresses become compounded.”

Human-caused climate change also fuels more extreme weather such as intense wind, rain and freezing temperatures.

“It’s not the gradual change that’s going to be the problem, it’s these extreme swings of too much water, too little water, too much wind, and storm intensities are going to cause these rapid changes,” said David Nowak, a retired scientist for the U.S. Forest Service.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 wiped out about 10% of the trees in New Orleans, said Michael Karam, Director of Parks and Parkways. And in 2021, he added, Hurricane Ida uprooted many new saplings.

“The need to increase the canopy is greater than in years past,” he said. “But the benefits in an urban setting remain the same. On any hot day, go in the shade and you’re reminded that trees are such a benefit to public health and welfare.”

A 2018 study by Nowak found that 25 states had seen significant tree declines earlier that decade.

Housing and commercial construction, compacted soil, pollution and even car crashes contribute to a city’s canopy loss.

Cities are familiar with large scale tree loss, but usually one kind of tree is affected, such as birches killed by a borer pest. With climate change, researchers are concerned canopy loss will outpace the rate of newly planted trees reaching maturity, which takes 10 to 20 years.

“A rising rate of tree mortality is coming to a city near you,” said Aaron Ramirez, a tree researcher at Reed College.

Between 2016 and 2021, Seattle lost 1.7% of its tree canopy, about 255 acres (255 hectares) of trees, according to a city report blaming climate change in part. To the south, Portland, Oregon last year saw its first reduction in canopy since it began keeping records two decades ago.

“We’ve spent a lot of time talking about the health of our forest in our natural, rural areas as we’ve seen increased stress from disease, insect infestation, drought — leading to catastrophic wildfires. But the fact is our urban forest, our urban trees, are equally stressed,” said Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz.

‘ASSISTED MIGRATION’

Rows of small black plastic pots bathe in morning sunlight at a maintenance lot for the city of Bellevue, Washington. All hold juvenile giant sequoias, just a few inches tall, that the city is growing for climate resilience.

Sequoias are not native to the Pacific Northwest, but tree managers in this city east of Seattle are planting more of them because they handle drought and pests.

“Once these trees are established, they grow incredibly fast,” said Rick Bailey, supervisor of the city’s forest management program. Native trees still make up about 70% of new trees planted.

Non-native trees have been brought to cities for a long time. Climate change, however, is prompting many arborists to consider increasing them in their city’s arboreal palette — a practice called “assisted migration.”

Arborists are looking for non-native species without “invasive tendencies,” said Scott Altenhoff of Oregon’s Urban and Community Forest Program.

Still, much research needs to be done to study resilient trees, said Ramirez of Reed College, whose lab found that an Alaska cedar did better in a hot summer than varieties from Oregon and California.

Planting more non-native trees is augmenting something city arborists have learned from decades of tree deaths: diversity in the types and ages of trees planted is key to keeping urban forests alive.

INCREASING COSTS

The small Puget Sound city of Burien, Washington, with around 80 employees, added one more in March: their first tree manager. The hiring was part an increased focus on the city’s canopy.

“We just had a discussion about ‘Can we get a water truck? Or something like that?’” said Josh Petter, the new arborist. “Because as we do have these increasing dry spells... I’d rather plant one tree and maintain it really well than plant 10 trees and then not maintain it.”

Costs of maintaining urban forests hit budgets in different ways. A new water truck is also being considered in New Orleans after this dry year. In Bellevue, the city growing giant sequoias, a large chunk of tree maintenance goes toward an increasing number of dead tree removals.

“We are not keeping up with level of maintenance and protection that is needed to make sure we’re not losing them,” said Evan Mallen of Georgia Tech, who said more cities need legislation to protect existing trees.

	<p>On a recent rainy week, volunteers for the Seattle parks department planted dozens of trees in a park west of the city. Among them was a western red cedar planted in the shadow of the exposed roots of a fallen oak.</p> <p>“Life always finds a way,” said Johnson, the department’s arborist. “And in Seattle, people are helping life find a way.”</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/16 SPD: man w/knife menaced students; arrest
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-arrest-man-after-menacing-students-with-knife-inside-school/5ZW2WZIA7VDXPFE2AHPQC4YN5A/
GIST	<p>A man was arrested after menacing students with a knife in a private Seattle school, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>At about 11:09 a.m. on Tuesday, officers responded to a report of a man menacing students at a private school in the Phinney Center in the 6500 block of Phinney Avenue North.</p> <p>According to police, once officers entered the school, they found the man hiding behind a moveable wall on the third floor.</p> <p>After placing barriers for shielding, an officer determined the man was in crisis.</p> <p>Through de-escalation and negotiation, the man was eventually taken into custody.</p> <p>Officers seized two weapons from the man – a large folding knife and a broomstick.</p> <p>The man was booked for Unlawful Use of Weapons to Intimidate.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 USAF combat veteran felony role Jan 6 riot
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/11/16/larry-brock-trial-guilty/
GIST	<p>Twenty-one minutes after Mike Pence was evacuated from the Senate chamber on Jan. 6, an Air Force combat veteran named Larry Brock used a set of keys to try to open the door he had left through.</p> <p>He did not succeed, and there is no evidence he knew how close he had come to the vice president. But Judge John D. Bates cited that moment in finding Brock guilty of six crimes related to his participation in the 2021 riot, including felony obstruction of Congress.</p> <p>“Mr. Brock did more than just be present in the Capitol,” Bates said at the end of a three-day bench trial, calling it “unfathomable that Mr. Brock believed he was authorized” to be there. He “could look around and realize that he was part of a mob,” Bates said.</p> <p>Brock is set to be sentenced Feb. 14.</p> <p>Brock, a retired lieutenant colonel from Texas, identified himself after the riot to New Yorker magazine, which had captured footage of him wearing tactical gear and carrying plastic zip-tie handcuffs on the Senate floor. He told the New Yorker he found the cuffs on the floor; it is not clear where he got the keys he used to try to open the door off the Senate chamber.</p> <p>Before Jan. 6, prosecutors noted, Brock made comments on Facebook, starting in November 2020, saying that “the battle isn’t winnable democratically” and that “fire and blood will be needed soon.” He said he</p>

bought a helmet and body armor “for the civil war that is coming.” He wrote five days before the riot that “the castle will be stormed.”

He also posted a proposed plan for taking over the government, including to “eliminate” the media.

“He was preparing for that assault as if it was a military operation,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas Meisel said in his opening statement, “and viewing it through the lens of a highly trained, tactically proficient military officer.”

Defense attorney Charles Burnham argued that Brock was not trying to break the law and was unaware he was not allowed inside the Capitol building.

Burnham said in his opening argument that Brock watched President Donald Trump speak, along with “hundreds of thousands of other people,” and then entered the Capitol with “an almost orderly procession” of demonstrators. (Estimates generally put the size of the Capitol crowd in the [tens of thousands](#).)

At that point, Burnham said, barricades surrounding the Capitol grounds had been torn down and the police “were off to the side, making no effort whatsoever to interfere with the movement of the crowd.”

Capitol Police leaders [have said](#) that once they realized they could not stop the breach, they prioritized safety over the building’s security.

Burnham said Brock was the victim of “tragic circumstance” that left him unaware of the violence of the crowd. Brock arrived at the west side of the Capitol just after windows and doors had been broken and just before police confronted the crowd on the steps. If he had been aware of the violence, Burnham said, Brock would have left.

Prosecutors played numerous videos from inside the Capitol showing Brock in the vicinity of violence and property damage. He was in the building for over half an hour. On the Senate floor, Brock told another rioter not to sit in the vice president’s chair. Burnham argued that was a sign of Brock’s “moderating influence”; prosecutors said it showed he understood “better than anyone else” the process the mob had disrupted.

In the clip, Brock said they are in an “IO war,” an apparent reference to [information operations](#).

Bates acknowledged that Brock at another point tried to stop other protesters from attacking police inside the building.

“But he didn’t leave,” Bates said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 SUV hits L.A. Co. sheriff academy recruits
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/16/los-angeles-county-sheriffs-recruits-injured-car-crash
GIST	<p>More than 20 Los Angeles county sheriff’s academy recruits were injured early Wednesday morning when an SUV driving the wrong way hit the class while they were on a training run.</p> <p>Authorities have detained a 22-year-old driver in connection with the incident, which left 25 people injured, five critically, including head trauma, broken bones and “loss of limb”, said Sheriff Alex Villanueva.</p> <p>“It looked like an airplane wreck,” Villanueva said. “There were so many bodies scattered everywhere in different states of injury that it was pretty traumatic for all individuals involved.”</p> <p>A vehicle struck the class of 75 recruits while they were on a training run around dawn in Whittier, a Los Angeles suburb that is home to the department’s Star Explorer Training Academy, officials said. The</p>

group was running in four columns with two black-and-white radio cars and eight “road guards” wearing reflective vests, authorities said.

The Honda CR-V was driving south when it crossed into northbound lanes and hit the recruits, who regularly run in the area in groups wearing “high-visibility vests”, [Fox 11 reported](#). The vehicle then crashed into a nearby light pole.

“Thank God for that light pole, because the vehicle ultimately hit it and stopped, as opposed to possibly hitting more recruits,” Captain Patrick Macdonald of the academy said.

A nearby county fire station immediately transported some of the most severely injured recruits to hospitals, possibly saving their lives, said Anthony C Marrone, a county fire chief.

Four had moderate injuries and 16 had minor injuries. One of those injured is on a ventilator, the sheriff said. Injured recruits were transported to about seven different hospitals, said Sheila Kelliher, a spokesperson and captain with the Los Angeles county fire department.

“So far, it looks like it’s an accident, a horrific accident,” Villanueva said.

Footage from TV news helicopters showed a large response of firefighters and ambulances, a grey SUV on a sidewalk next to a toppled light pole as well as numerous individuals nearby in uniform workout clothes. Running shoes and a backpack were strewn on the ground as was a 25mph speed limit sign.

The [California](#) highway patrol (CHP) is investigating the incident. Officials are looking at all possibilities, from an intentional act to impaired driving, said Charlie Sampson, the assistant chief of the CHP.

Authorities have not yet identified the driver, describing him only as a 22-year-old man from suburban Diamond Bar who suffered a minor injury. The driver passed a field sobriety test, the sheriff said. The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported that law enforcement sources had told the newspaper that the driver had said he was sleepy.

“We know for sure we have a 22-year-old male driver that was going the wrong way and ran into the class,” Kelliher said at a press conference on Wednesday morning. “At this point that is what we know. We don’t know much else about the driver.”

In a statement, California’s governor, Gavin Newsom, said: “Our hearts are with the Los Angeles county sheriff’s recruits injured this morning while training to serve their communities.”

“Jennifer and I send our best wishes for their recovery and stand with their loved ones and colleagues at the Los Angeles county sheriff’s department during this difficult time.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 Driver killed 6 in Christmas parade gets life
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/darrell-brooks-jr-gets-life-sentence-no-chance-of-/
GIST	<p>A judge sentenced a man who killed six people and injured many others when he drove his SUV through a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee to life in prison with no chance of release Wednesday, rejecting arguments from him and his family that mental illness drove him to do it.</p> <p>Waukesha County Circuit Judge Jennifer Dorow sentenced 40-year-old Darrell Brooks Jr. on 76 charges, including six counts of first-degree intentional homicide and 61 counts of reckless endangerment.</p> <p>Each homicide count carried a mandatory life sentence, and the only uncertainty Wednesday was whether Dorow would allow Brooks to serve any portion of those sentences on extended supervision in the community, the state’s current version of parole. She did not. Wisconsin doesn’t have the death penalty.</p>

The gallery applauded as Dorow announced the life sentences. Moments later she sentenced him to 762 years in prison on the endangerment counts.

“Frankly, Mr. Brooks, no one is safe from you,” Dorow said. “This community can only be safe if you are behind bars for the rest of your life. ... You left a path of destruction, chaos, death, injury and panic as you drove seven or so blocks through the Christmas parade.”

Dorow had bailiffs move Brooks to another courtroom where he could participate via video after he became disruptive during her pre-sentencing remarks. He stood motionless in his jail garb and handcuffs as the judge announced the sentences.

Brooks’ victims demanded during a hearing Tuesday that Dorow give him the toughest sentence possible. Chris Owens, whose mother was among those killed, told Brooks: “All I ask is you rot, and you rot slow.”

Brooks drove his red Ford Escape through the parade in downtown Waukesha on Nov. 21, 2021, after getting into a fight with his ex-girlfriend. Six people were killed, including 8-year-old Jackson Sparks, who was marching with his baseball team, and three members of a group known as the Dancing Grannies. Scores of others were injured.

On Wednesday, before the judge handed down her sentence, Brooks told the court that he suffered from mental illness since he was young and didn’t plan to drive into the parade route. He also offered his first apology to the dozens of people who were hurt or lost loved ones during the incident.

Brooks told Dorow in remarks that rambled past two hours that he grew up fatherless, poor and hungry in apartment buildings infested with rats and bugs. Brooks said he has dealt with mental health issues for as long as he can remember and that he was physically abused, though he didn’t say by whom specifically. At times he took medication and did short stints in mental health facilities and life was better then, he said.

“People are going to, like I said, believe what they want, and that’s OK. This needs to be said: What happened on Nov. 21, 2021, was not, not, not an attack. It was not planned, plotted,” Brooks said, adding later: “This was not an intentional act. No matter how many times you say it over and over, it was not.”

Brooks also offered his first apology to the victims and their families.

“I want you to know that not only am I sorry for what happened, I’m sorry that you could not see what’s truly in my heart,” he said. “That you cannot see the remorse that I have.”

But Brooks didn’t explain his motive or offer any other insights into what he was thinking as he turned the SUV into the parade. When Dorow asked him what sentence he thought he should get, he didn’t answer directly but said: “I just want to be helped.”

Brooks’ mother and grandmother tried to persuade Dorow to place Brooks in a mental institution rather than prison. His grandmother, Mary Edwards, said Brooks has been bipolar since he was 12 and that disorder caused him to drive into the parade. His mother, Dawn Woods, pushed Dorow to ensure that Brooks receives treatment in prison.

“If they have to stay for the rest of their lives away from society at least they’re getting the help they need to become mentally well,” Woods said.

Brooks appeared to weep as his mother spoke.

Dorow said before she handed down the sentences that she doesn’t believe Brooks is mentally ill, pointing out that four psychologists who evaluated him earlier this year found that he suffers from an anti-social personality disorder but not a mental illness.

	<p>“It is my opinion that mental health issues did not cause him to do what he did on Nov. 21, 2021, and frankly didn’t play a role,” the judge said Wednesday. “It is very clear to me that he understands the difference between right and wrong and he simply chooses to ignore his conscience. He is fueled by anger and rage.”</p> <p>Dorow spent most of Tuesday listening to dozens of victims demand Brooks get the maximum possible sentence. One by one they described frantically searching for their children in the immediate aftermath, the pain their children have endured as they still struggle to recover from their injuries and the emptiness they feel as they cope with the loss of their dead loved ones.</p> <p>District Attorney Susan Opper asked Dorow on Tuesday to make the sentences consecutive so they stack up “just as he stacked victims up as he drove down the road,” with no chance of release on extended supervision.</p> <p>Brooks chose to represent himself during his monthlong trial, which was punctuated by his erratic outbursts. He refused to answer to his own name, frequently interrupted Dorow and often refused to stop talking. Multiple times the judge had bailiffs move Brooks to another courtroom where he could participate via video but she could mute his microphone when he became disruptive, just as she did Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 China official convicted of spying: 20yrs jail
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/16/xu-yanjun-chinese-spy-who-targeted-ge-aviation-get/
GIST	<p>A Chinese government official convicted of spying on and stealing trade secrets from Cincinnati-based GE Aviation, believed to be the first Chinese espionage suspect extradited to the U.S., was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years in prison.</p> <p>“Today’s sentence demonstrates the seriousness of those crimes and the Justice Department’s determination to investigate and prosecute efforts by the Chinese government, or any foreign power, to threaten our economic and national security,” U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said.</p> <p>Xu Yanjun worked for the Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS). He targeted both U.S. and foreign aviation companies in order to acquire trade secrets and technical specifications beginning at least by December 2013, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Ohio.</p> <p>Xu also served as a handler for other Chinese spies in America.</p> <p>In 2014, Xu had Ji Chaoqun, himself convicted of espionage in September 2022, register as a foreign agent in order to collect biographical information on future targets.</p> <p>Ji was studying at an unspecified Chicago school at the time, and was directed to recruit at least nine other individuals whose names Xu provided him.</p> <p>In May 2016, Ji joined the U.S. military via a program that recruited legal aliens with Chinese fluency. Ji then told Xu and his MSS colleagues that he had successfully infiltrated the military, and would be able to provide information.</p> <p>Ji would go on to inform an undercover FBI agent that he could access all military bases with his ID before volunteering unprompted to provide pictures of aircraft carriers to the MSS.</p> <p>“Xu’s handling and placement of a spy within the United States to obtain information regarding aviation technology and employees is yet another facet of Xu’s egregious crimes towards the United States,” said Kenneth Parker, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio.</p> <p>In March 2017, Xu attempted to steal technology relating to a GE Aviation fan module for composite aircraft engines, something that other companies have not yet successfully replicated.</p>

An employee of GE Aviation was solicited to speak at a Chinese university. Two months later, the unnamed employee visited the school and met Xu, who paid for the travel expenses as well as a stipend for the employee.

From there, however, the FBI took over communication, with Xu left thinking he was still in contact with the GE Aviation employee.

In January 2018, Xu asked the employee to send system and design process documents to him. With the assent of GE Aviation, the FBI and the employee sent over a “two-page document from the company that included a label that warned about the disclosure of proprietary information,” the USAO-SDOH noted.

In February 2018, Xu suggested to the employee that the two meet during a business trip in Europe, and requested a copy of the file directory for the employee’s company-issued computer.

Xu would show up in Belgium on April 1, 2018, with cash and pictures of the employee. Xu, however, was the April Fool, arrested upon arrival and eventually extradited to the United States from Belgium.

Xu would be convicted on counts of conspiracy to commit economic espionage, conspiracy to commit trade secret theft, attempted economic espionage and attempted trade secret theft on Nov. 5, 2021.

On Wednesday, Xu was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison.

“The historic sentencing of a Chinese government official for committing espionage against the U.S. is a significant achievement and also should serve as a warning to foreign governments that the U.S. will not tolerate this type of illegal activity,” stated FBI Cincinnati Special Agent in Charge J. William Rivers in the USAO-SDOH announcement.

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HEADLINE	11/16 More sexual abuse in JROTC programs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/us/jrotc-sexual-abuse-house-oversight.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Pentagon received documented reports of at least 58 instances in the last five years in which high school military instructors who led Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps classes sexually abused or harassed students, military officials told a congressional subcommittee on Wednesday in response to criticism that they had failed to properly oversee the program.</p> <p>Assistant secretaries from the Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as the Department of Defense, testified before a House national security subcommittee, whose members grilled them about procedures for vetting instructors and rooting out abuse in the program, known as J.R.O.T.C. Hundreds of thousands of high school students are enrolled in the program in 3,500 high schools across the country. One congresswoman has floated the idea of temporarily shutting the program down.</p> <p>The hearing followed a New York Times investigation in July that found that 33 instructors had been criminally charged with sexual misconduct involving student victims over five years. The Pentagon’s higher number of substantiated allegations appeared to include additional instances in which the abuse or misconduct had not resulted in criminal charges. All 58 of those instructors had been decertified, the military officials reported, except for two who had killed themselves.</p> <p>The military officials expressed their outrage at the abuse and said they had begun reviewing policies regarding J.R.O.T.C., which provides students with training in leadership, civic values, weapons handling and other skills.</p> <p>Thomas A. Constable, the Defense Department’s acting assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said the Pentagon expected to recommend a list of possible changes by the end of the year. He and the other military leaders said part of the problem was a lack of standardization across the branches in oversight, background investigations and coordination with school districts over how the programs are run.</p>

The pledges were not enough for some lawmakers, including Representative Jackie Speier, Democrat of California, who was highly critical over The Times's findings, which included cases in which instructors targeted multiple victims, or were allowed to remain teaching despite complaints from students that were not thoroughly investigated.

"I'm not going to sugarcoat this: This is a scandal," Ms. Speier said, later adding: "In some respects, I feel we should just shut down this program until you can get it right."

She said the findings were particularly disturbing in light of long-running investigations of sexual abuse within the U.S. military.

"It is chilling to think that after we have been addressing this issue for over 10 years within the military — where we know that cases exceed 20,000 to 30,000 a year and only 5,000 report, and we know that the chain of command has been part of the problem — to come and see this going on in our classrooms, in high school, is traumatizing to me, to be quite honest," she said.

Military leaders and members of Congress said that when run successfully, the program was a vital way to teach teenagers life skills, discipline and leadership, and to expose them to military careers at a time when recruiting has become an increasing challenge. But the lawmakers said military officials had not taken reports of abuse seriously enough and had largely placed the responsibility of uncovering bad behavior on school districts.

The Times investigation detailed how the military certifies instructors — all retired veterans, many after lengthy careers in the armed services — but then takes a hands-off approach, turning supervision over to the schools. Instructors often grow close to their students, becoming mentors and leading extracurricular activities off campus or outside normal school hours. Those bonds can help guide students through difficult periods of high school or give them a positive role model, but they can also lead to problems when instructors use those positions to abuse their students.

The subcommittee in its own investigation found that all of the military branches had failed to conduct annual inspections of every program, as is required by the Defense Department. Military officials suggested on Wednesday that more funding would allow them to hire more staff members to inspect the programs more frequently.

The Army runs the largest of the J.R.O.T.C. programs, and Yvette K. Bourcicot, the Army's acting assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said taking J.R.O.T.C. at a high school in a suburb of Washington, D.C., had set her on a path toward a top Army leadership role. She said that she found the recent reports of abuse very worrisome.

"J.R.O.T.C. instructor mistreatment of cadets is particularly egregious because of the faith and confidence that the Army, parents, students and the nation place in those teachers," Ms. Bourcicot said. She noted that the Army had enhanced its background checks, in 2014, for employees who regularly deal with children, including J.R.O.T.C. instructors. She said that the Army was preparing to roll out annual attestation forms to instructors in which they would promise to "uphold Army values."

Alex Wagner, the Air Force's assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said that 92 percent of the Air Force's instructors are men, despite the fact that about 40 percent of cadets are women, and that the branch was prioritizing the hiring of more female instructors. He said the Air Force was also reviewing its vetting processes and would start including information about how to contact J.R.O.T.C. headquarters on the consent forms that parents and students sign at the beginning of the school year.

Still, by the end of the nearly two-hour hearing, Representative Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the committee, was among several lawmakers who expressed dissatisfaction with the officials' responses, saying he was disappointed that the military seemed to "lack a sense of urgency."

	<p>Earlier, he had grown frustrated with Robert D. Hogue, the Navy's acting assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, when Mr. Hogue said he could not "speak with any familiarity on how we stack up against regular high schools and allegations that are faced within districts concerning teachers."</p> <p>The Times had reported that the percentage of J.R.O.T.C. instructors who were criminally prosecuted for sexual misconduct involving student victims was higher than the rate of civilian high school teachers in several jurisdictions that were examined.</p> <p>Mr. Hogue said the Navy was alarmed and concerned by every instance of abuse, but that local police and school districts were primarily responsible for investigating misconduct by instructors.</p> <p>Jacey Antokoletz, one of the young women interviewed for The Times's report about being sexually abused by her J.R.O.T.C. instructor when she was a high school junior in Brewster, N.Y., said the hearing was a welcome sign that politicians were taking her and other victims' experiences seriously.</p> <p>"I'm glad that they're hammering down so hard on it," said Ms. Antokoletz, who is now 23 and working as an accountant. "I'm happy to be part of coming forward so that more attention can be drawn to the issue, but it really is unfortunate that it took the article coming out to even address that this is going on."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 PD: 'cannot say no threat to community'
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/knife-used-in-targeted-attack-of-4-university-of-idaho-students-found-dead-police-say
GIST	<p>MOSCOW, Idaho - The killer — or killers — responsible for the brutal slayings of four University of Idaho students remained at large Wednesday, prompting many students to leave the campus in the idyllic small town.</p> <p>So many students had left the scenic tree-lined campus in Moscow, Idaho, by Tuesday that university officials said a candlelight vigil scheduled for the next day would instead be held after the Thanksgiving break.</p> <p>In a press conference on Wednesday, police chief James Fry said, "We cannot say there is no threat to the community."</p> <p>Some of the victims' family members have been urging police to release more information about the killings and to reveal why they initially said there was no ongoing danger.</p> <p>The students were found dead in an off-campus rental home around noon on Sunday, and officials said they likely were killed several hours earlier. Police said the students had been attacked with a knife or other "edged weapon," but did not elaborate.</p> <p>The Moscow Police Department has not said whether investigators have identified any suspects, but maintained in a statement that the killings came in "an isolated, targeted attack." Initially, police said "there is no imminent threat to the community at large." Police also said evidence from the scene indicates there is no broader risk, but provided no information about that evidence nor why they believe the victims were targeted.</p> <p>Fry said there was no sign of forced entry, and a door was found open by the first police officers to arrive. Two other people were found alive and unhurt in the home.</p> <p>The department said investigators were working to establish a timeline of the victims' activities before they were killed. Autopsies expected to be completed this week could provide more information about the slayings.</p>

Investigators were "following all leads and identifying persons of interest" in the case, the police statement said.

Police responding to a report of an unconscious person at the home Sunday discovered the students' bodies. The victims were identified as:

- Ethan Chapin, a 20-year-old from Conway, Washington
- Madison Mogen, a 21-year-old from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Xana Kernodle, 20, from Avondale, Arizona
- Kaylee Goncalves, 21, from Rathdrum, Idaho.

Authorities have not described which, if any, of the victims lived in the home.

Photos on Instagram show the four as close-knit, longstanding friends. All were members of sororities or fraternities. Kernodle and Chapin were dating.

In one post, Kernodle wished Chapin a happy birthday, writing, "life is so much better with you in it, love you!" The caption was accompanied by a photo of Chapin in a chef's hat with Kernodle on his shoulders and wearing mouse ears.

Several weeks ago, Goncalves posted a series of photos showing her and Mogen growing up together. "I wouldn't have wanted anyone else to be the main character in all my childhood stories," she wrote.

"I love you more than life! My best friend forever and more," Mogen replied.

Another photo, apparently posted hours before they died, showed the four smiling and posing, seemingly carefree, along with two other friends. Chapin had his arm draped over Kernodle's shoulders, and Mogen was perched on Goncalves' shoulders.

"One lucky girl to be surrounded by these people every day," Goncalves wrote.

Signs of the community's grief and uncertainty were scattered throughout the small farming town on Tuesday. Moscow has about 26,000 residents but that population swells by about 11,000 when the students arrive.

A makeshift memorial with flowers, candles and notes was set up on a table in front of the Mad Greek restaurant in downtown Moscow where Kernodle and Mogen had worked. Four white pillar candles, each inscribed with the name of a slain student, burned in the center of the table.

The restaurant's owner wrote on Facebook that Mad Greek would close for a few days so staffers, friends and family could grieve "this incredible loss."

"Xana and Maddie have been servers here for several years and brought so much joy to our restaurant and all of those they encountered," the owner, Jackie Fischer, wrote. "You will be greatly missed. Thank you for being a part of our family/team, and for helping me so much over the years."

A flag flew at half-staff before the Sigma Chi fraternity, where Chapin was a member, just a short walk from the home where the four died.

The six-bedroom rental home remained surrounded by crime scene tape on Tuesday but had little sign of activity inside. A Latah County Sheriff's deputy stood guard near the driveway, and Idaho State Police officers were also at the scene.

Moscow police Captain Anthony Dahlinger said police were "trying to identify a suspect" but would not say if investigators had anyone in mind.

"These things are dynamic and constantly changing," Dahlinger said.

The University of Idaho canceled classes on Monday and said additional security staffers would be available to walk students across campus. Still, the lack of arrests and scarcity of information about the deaths prompted many to leave days before the Thanksgiving break was scheduled to begin.

The students who remained showed little sign of apprehension.

"I feel pretty safe," said student Nicole June on Tuesday. "I believe the police can do their job."

Nathan Lannigan, 18, said he was surprised with reports that there is no ongoing threat since a perpetrator has not been captured.

"That's a quick judgement, I think," Lannigan said.

In a Monday memo, University of Idaho President Scott Green urged university employees to be empathetic and flexible, and work with students who wanted to spend time with their families.

"Words cannot adequately describe the light these students brought to this world or ease the depth of suffering we feel at their passing under these tragic circumstances," Green wrote of the slain students.

The university said Chapin was a freshman, and Kernodle was a junior majoring in marketing and a member of the Pi Beta Phi sorority. Mogen was a senior also majoring in marketing who belonged to Pi Beta Phi, and Goncalves was a senior majoring in general studies and a member of the Alpha Phi sorority, the university said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Moscow PD investigates students slayings
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/university-of-idaho-students-killed/moscow-press-conference-university-of-idaho-student-deaths-homicide/293-6b4239d4-4ffd-40e5-96f5-4ef60a2d5768
GIST	<p>MOSCOW, Idaho — The Moscow Police Department (MPD) has been tight-lipped since the beginning of the homicide investigation into the four University of Idaho students killed near campus but has now delivered major updates to the public in a press conference held Wednesday.</p> <p>Four University of Idaho students were found dead in a home on King Road Sunday afternoon. The students have been identified as Xana Kernodle, Ethan Chapin, Madison Mogen and Kaylee Goncalves. Moscow Police initially said the four students were killed with a "sharp-edged object," later revealed to be a knife. The weapon has not been recovered.</p> <p>Police have not identified a suspect in the student's deaths and have released little information about the investigation to the public. Wednesday's press conference was the first time police spoke about the ongoing investigation with the public.</p> <p>Moscow Police Chief James Fry, Idaho State Police (ISP) Director Colonel Kedrick Wills and University of Idaho President Scott Green were all present at the press conference.</p> <p>"The reality is, I probably should have been standing here a day or so ago," Fry said. "But I'm here now. We're going to continue to give you the information we can share about this case."</p> <p>Here's what Moscow police know at this time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Saturday evening, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin were at a party on campus, away from the crime scene. Madison Mogen and Kaylee Goncalves were at a bar and came home at approximately 1:45 a.m. on Sunday morning.• Police responded to a report of an unconscious person at a house near campus just before noon on Sunday.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When police arrived, they found the four victims and two other people, both uninjured, who lived in the home. • The victims had all been stabbed with a knife. • Officers found no sign of forced entry into the residence. When the police arrived, the door was still open. • There was no attempt at a robbery. • Officers continue to reiterate that this was an isolated, targeted attack. • There is no suspect at this time. Police also said they could no longer say there was no threat to the community. • The roommates of the victims were in the home at the time of the attack and were not hurt. <p>What police do not know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An accurate timeline of where the victims were before their deaths. • The location of the suspect or the weapon. • If the victims were killed with the same weapon. • Why the two other roommates were not injured. <p>A video circulating online appears to show Maddie and Kaylee ordering from a food truck hours before they were killed. Fry said investigators are aware of the video and are using it to help form a timeline of events leading up to their deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Standoff near Kent elementary school ends
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/kent/kent-elementary-school-closed-man-points-gun-family-member/281-ca7b7242-674a-4cc0-86bc-d8a2bb950be3
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — The suspect involved in a standoff near Meridian Elementary School in Kent on Monday was taken into custody Wednesday afternoon.</p> <p>The elementary school was closed Tuesday and Wednesday due to concerns over the 26-year-old man in a nearby home who police say pointed a gun at a family member on Monday and started a standoff. Kent Police say the man was acting erratic and was saying concerning comments about the school. During the incident, the school was put on a lockdown for around five hours.</p> <p>According to the Kent School District, school will be canceled again on Thursday and Friday. Classes are expected to resume Monday, Nov. 21. There will be an open house at the school so students can pick up meals. It will be open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p> <p>A teacher told KING 5 that the man was on campus earlier that day and seemed to be having a mental health crisis. The teacher also said that all teachers, school administration, and students reacted in a haste, secure, and professional way during the lockdown.</p> <p>The Kent Police Department (KPD) said officers were called just before 5:30 a.m. Monday to a home in the 25800 block of 140th Avenue Southeast, which is near some of the playfields on the Meridian Elementary School campus.</p> <p>Officers were told the man, who lives in the home, pointed a .22 caliber rifle at a family member but did not make a threat. The rifle was secured with a chamber lock, police said. The family member told officers the suspect was "possibly in crisis."</p> <p>Police said the family members left the home, leaving the suspect alone inside.</p> <p>Valley SWAT and the Valley Hostage Negotiation Team were called to the home at about 10:30 a.m., five hours after the initial call. Negotiators spent several hours on the phone talking to the suspect and encouraged him to leave the home, but he refused, according to police.</p>

During negotiations with the SWAT team, police said a family member re-entered the house and took the rifle from the suspect. The rifle the suspect had is in police custody.

The suspect never left the residence and the gun was never fired.

Officers said they did not have legal justification to enter the home for a community caretaking intervention and there was not enough probable cause to enter for arrest. Assistant Police Chief Jarod Casner said the department had several officers who had worked dozens of hours on the case, trying to get the man into custody.

"We want to get the male in custody for two primary reasons. First, once he is in custody we can engage resources to evaluate his mental competency and leverage treatment resources. Second, we also know that having the male in custody will alleviate the concerns that he poses a threat to the school or others," said Casner, when Kent Police were still trying to obtain a warrant.

KPD said they had five prior incidents with this suspect since 2016 and that this was the first incident in 2022.

Officers were patrolling the school campus and neighborhood from the time of the standoff until the man was in custody.

Parents said they felt that Kent Police and the Kent School District were not communicating enough and that parents were left concerned and confused.

The Kent School District did not respond to KING 5's requests for comment, but they had a statement on their website that said, in part:

"We appreciate everyone for their patience during this situation as we try to be proactive in our communications during these unusual circumstances," the letter stated.

One parent did tell KING 5 that although she wished the district communicated more, she appreciates how the school dealt with the situation and chose to keep the kids home from school.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Idaho police: no suspect students slayings
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/News-conference-set-in-slaying-of-4-Idaho-college-17590106.php
GIST	<p>BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Police in the college town of Moscow said Wednesday they have not identified a suspect or found a weapon in the weekend slayings of four University of Idaho students in a rental house near campus.</p> <p>Authorities continue to believe the attack was targeted but walked back a previous statement that there was no threat to the public.</p> <p>“Investigators are working to follow up on all the leads and identify a person of interest,” Moscow Police Chief James Fry said at a news conference. “We do not have a suspect at this time, and that individual is still out there. We cannot say that there is no threat to the community.”</p> <p>“We need to be aware of our surroundings,” Fry said.</p> <p>All four victims were stabbed with a knife, the chief reported. There was no sign of forced entry, and a door was found open by the first police officers to arrive. Two other people were found alive and unhurt in the large home.</p> <p>“I’m not going to go into what they shared,” Fry said.</p>

"We're focusing on everyone," he added. "We're still following up with everyone that could have been in that area."

Some of the victims' family members have been urging tight-lipped police to release more information about the killings and to reveal why they said there was no ongoing danger.

Fry defended those statements, saying, "We take the totality of the things we see ... and make the best decision we can. I'm not going to expand on that."

The victims — three women and one man, all close friends — were found dead Sunday afternoon by police responding to a report of an unconscious person at the home. Officials said they were likely killed several hours earlier.

Fry would not say who it was that called 911.

The victims were identified as Madison Mogan, 21, from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Kaylee Goncalves, 21, from Rathdrum, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, from Avondale, Arizona; and Ethan Chapin, 20, from Conway, Washington.

Autopsies were performed Wednesday in nearby Spokane, Washington, and Idaho State Police and the FBI were also working the case, Fry said

The family of Goncalves issued a warning to whoever was behind the killings.

"To whomever is responsible, we will find you. We will never stop. The pain you caused has fueled our hatred and sealed your fate," the family said in a tweeted statement. "Justice will be served."

Moscow is a town of about 25,000 in the Idaho Panhandle, some 80 miles south of Spokane.

News of the slayings prompted many of the 11,000 students to leave the Idaho campus early for Thanksgiving break.

University of Idaho president Scott Green also spoke at the news conference and said the school will remain open the rest of the week because some students found comfort in being on campus with faculty and classmates. But the school was also giving excused absences to anyone who feels more comfortable leaving early.

"We will support each other as we grieve," Green said, his voice breaking as he read out the four names. "We just want justice for these victims."

Aubrie Goncalves, Kaylee's sister, posted a message on Instagram urging students to leave.

"Your grades are severely less important than your lives. I wish all the students of U of I safety and peace," she wrote a few hours before the police news conference. "You guys are not safe until this sicko is found. If the person who did this is capable of killing four innocent people, they are capable of killing more."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Iran: gunmen attack bazaar killing 5
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/state-media-gunmen-attack-bazaar-iran-killing-93420257
GIST	DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Gunmen opened fire in a bazaar in the southwestern Iranian city of Izeh on Wednesday, killing at least five people, including a young girl, and wounding civilians and security forces, state TV reported.

In a separate attack, gunmen shot dead two members of Iran's paramilitary Basij in the central city of Isfahan, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. In both attacks, the gunmen were reportedly riding motorcycles.

It was not immediately clear what motivated the attacks or if they were linked to the nationwide protests that have convulsed Iran over the past two months. Another 10 people, including security forces, were wounded in the shooting in Izeh, according to state TV.

Valiollah Hayati, deputy governor of the Khuzestan province, where the Izeh is located, told state TV that a young girl and a woman were among those killed.

State TV said that groups of several dozens of protesters had gathered in different parts of Izeh late Wednesday, chanting anti-government slogans and hurling rocks at police, who fired tear gas to disperse them. State-linked media also reported that someone set fire to a Shiite religious seminary.

Violence has erupted around some of the protests as security forces have clamped down on dissent. Iran has also seen a number of recent attacks blamed on separatists and religious extremists, including a shooting at a major Shiite shrine last month that killed over a dozen people and was claimed by the Islamic State group.

The demonstrations were ignited by the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old woman who was being held by the country's morality police and rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's ruling clerics and an end to the theocracy established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Authorities have heavily restricted media access and periodically shut down the internet, making it difficult to confirm details of unrest in different parts of the country.

The violence in Izeh took place on the second day of a three-day general strike called by the protesters. The strike commemorates an earlier round of nationwide protests in 2019 in which hundreds of demonstrators were killed.

Iranian officials have blamed the unrest on hostile foreign actors without providing evidence. The protesters say they are fed up after decades of repression by a clerical establishment that they view as corrupt and authoritarian.

At least 362 people have been killed and 16,033 arrested in the latest wave of protests, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group monitoring the monthslong unrest. Rights groups accuse security forces of firing live ammunition and bird shot at demonstrators, and of beating them with batons.

Iran's Revolutionary Court, which tries security cases, issued a preliminary verdict sentencing three protesters to death in the capital, Tehran, earlier on Wednesday, state media reported. That brings the number of death sentences to four since the latest protests began. None have been carried out.

Mizan, a news website linked to Iran's judiciary, did not identify the accused but said one of them had allegedly rammed a vehicle into police, killing one and wounding others. It said another was accused of attacking security forces with a knife and setting fire to a government building. The third individual was accused of blocking a street and leading a violent demonstration. Mizan said the verdicts can be appealed.

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